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This 'Portrait of a Young Woman' in black and red chalk, pen and brown ink, by Jacob Jordaens, was formerly ascribed to Rubens. The artist has yet to be identified. The drawing which was probably executed c. 1635-1640 is included in the recently published volume of drawings in The Porpoise Morgan Library. (See page 744 for details)

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### An African in Greenland

### The ambiguous life of W. H. Auden

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JULY 3 1981

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# Between the character and the role

By J. M. Cameron

JOHN BAYLEY:  
Shakespeare and Tragedy  
228pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£9.75 (paperback, £4.95).  
0 7100 0632 2

One is tempted to plunge into Shakespeare as into an inviting ocean. There is so much stimulation about. There are the classic commentators: Johnson, Coleridge, Bradley, Wilson Knight, Middleton Murry (this was perhaps his best critical work). Then there are all those who in the past fifty years have moved us to think more deeply about the plays and poems: Eliot, Empson, Clifford Leech, Danby, Kenneth Muir, G. B. Harrison, Dover Wilson, Derek Traversi, Tillyard, Maynard Mack, R. A. Foakes... to make an arbitrary selection. Then there are the fascinating single works: Anne Righter's *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, Wyndham Lewis's *The Lion and the Fox*, Muir and O'Loughlin's *The Voyage to Illyria* (what a brilliant debut, in 1937, this was for the two young men), Michael Platt's *Rome and Romans according to Shakespeare*, M. D. H. Parker's *The Slave of Life*, M. M. Mahood's *Shakespeare's Word Play*, S. L. Bethell's *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* – again, to make a quite arbitrary selection, for one could draw up long lists of works all valuable in their various ways.

Then there are the instruments of study, handbooks, monographs on law and medicine and botany, historical works, books on Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries, treatises on the structure of the theatre, and all the work on the life of the poet, generally presided over, one might say, by Samuel Schoenbaum. Finally, there are the works themselves, in many sizes, shapes, combinations, with many kinds and degrees of scholarly attachments: one might pick out the New Variorum editions of Furness reprinted by Dover Books, the indispensable Arden Shakespeare, the one-volume editions – the Riverside Shakespeare lies before me as I write – and there is Professor Alexander's reliable text; and the humble nieces and nephews of the more elaborate editions, notably two Penguin Shakespeares, one for Britain, one for the United States.

Here is enough material to satisfy the gluttony of a lifetime and to excite ambition. Those who have gained a critical reputation in other fields are likely to conceive a yearning to feel the temptation, to try a fall with Shakespeare.

John Bayley, justly celebrated for *The Characters of Love* and for books on Tolstoy and Pushkin, is one of the many who have been so moved. The publisher's blurb tells us that his place is with the classic commentators; he is said to be "of the same calibre", as a critic of Shakespeare, as Bradley and Wilson Knight. This is unfair to Professor Bayley, who is here entered for a race he probably never intended to compete in, and no service to the reader. *Shakespeare and Tragedy* is full of interest, has many good things to say on particular parts of the plays; and since about Shakespeare, as about life, there is always something new to say, what Bayley writes may enrich the stream of commentary. His Shakespeare is and is not the Shakespeare of his predecessors, and yet it is clear he is responding to the same data as did Bradley or Wilson Knight.

The element of cultural relativism in responses to Shakespeare is hard to isolate: we may think that Tate's surgery on *King Lear* is motivated by an apprehension of the play identical with our own, for we too find the death of Cordelia repugnant, so that what marks the difference between

Tate's time and our own isn't easy to state. We are inclined to think that perhaps the difference lies in our different estimates of the status of the text; but our time no more respects the sacredness of the text than did the eighteenth century. The spirit of Jan Kott's *Shakespeare as Dialogue* was just as iconoclastic as Tate's. But I suspect that the censoring out of the transcendent and the humane makes most of us uneasy. Each period will no doubt have its own blindness. Dryden seems to have thought that luck rather than poetic mastery accounted for Shakespeare's success, finding him "Gothick and half-barbarous"; and in our own day Isabella's preference in *Measure for Measure* for consecrated virginity over her brother's life may excite derision in audiences without historical imagination, or even historical information.

Again, since roles in plays are manikins on which we hang the clothes of particular performances, how we see the characters may, at least in a limited way, be governed by how they are played. For example, Lady Macbeth may be played as the bored, ambitious wife of a weak captain of artillery, and Hamlet as anything from a clinical study of the manic-depressive to an absent-minded don caught up in a world of politics and violence for which he is quite unsuited. This doesn't mean that all choices as to how a character is to be played are equally plausible, for a Falstaff who takes no pleasure in his own discourse, or a rendering which takes us too far from the play, as perhaps Olivier's Othello, for all its brilliance, did, in a plain sense false to the text.

The text: here, it seems, is where we must begin, and here end, no matter how far we may travel between beginning and ending. It is a concern with our primary relation to the text that causes Bayley to begin with theoretical considerations about texts, readers, and critics. He writes: "Treating a text as a purely verbal experience, they [modish practitioners] read it as a multiple code to be deciphered by a number of signifying keys." (There are severe difficulties here, for the notion of a purely verbal experience seems unclear: "purely verbal" is meant to exclude other things that we

might plausibly but wrongly suppose to be in the experience. The expression is vaguely limiting, so that one doesn't know quite what to look out for. Perhaps the point is that all we have in the case of a given fiction is a structure of words – these words in this order, as used to be said – and that working with this structure is what reading is. (It has to be said, though, that it is logically as well as factually impossible that any structure of words should be solitary or stand outside history.)

Modern techniques of criticism are said to remove the author, and so should find it convenient that few attempts are now made to discover Shakespeare the man in his work. The author is his language and its functions, extending into all our further acts of imagination about his text. And oddly enough something very like these conscious tenets of structuralism and semiotics have long been unconscious assumptions where Shakespearean criticism is concerned: Shakespeare critics have talked about him in this way without knowing it. Working inside a code of significance, they have understood and interpreted him according to their own lights and their own ideas of enjoyment.

This is rather in the spirit of Sir William Harcourt's "we're all socialists now" or of that period in the late 1940s and early 1950s when it turned out that all philosophers of interest and merit were in some large sense existentialists. In any case, it seems that these frugal references to current theory – for instance, that the text is the only author we can be concerned with – don't strictly apply to Shakespeare, for we are told that intimacy with Shakespeare is not, as it is in the cases of Flaubert and George Eliot and Henry James, intimacy with "the text as author"; and "about the world there is nothing to say, though there is everything to say about our relations with it". This last statement must be badly put or quite mistaken, for we could not distinguish our relations to *x* as distinct from *y* unless we could identify *x* under some description.

The "text as world" is said to offer the same challenges as the "text as author", in that in this case too we have to crack a code. An example of this is said to be offered by Maurice Morgann in his essay "The Dramatic Character of Sir

John Falstaff". Whereas the play requires Falstaff to be a coward and a buffoon, the language of the play flouts this requirement. In Morgann's terminology our impression of Falstaff is different from what we should be inclined to think is his role in the two parts of *Henry IV*. There is, Bayley believes, a similar effect in the tragedies:

His tragedies, showing that they are tragedies, seem also to avoid being themselves, in a sense that would also be true of *Henry IV*, which the presence of Falstaff turns into something different from a history play, but there an inspired addition suffices the historical narrative. The tragedies add nothing to a traditional tragic formula but produce a different result. The tragic characters avoid their roles by performing them in their own way.

Such are some of the theoretically buttressed considerations Bayley thinks important and influential in his approach to the text of the tragedies. What he later has to say about the plays seems to me to have not much connection with his initial gesture towards theory. There is sometimes a surface reference. Sometimes we find locutions that presuppose there is some sense in which texts rather than authors are subjects to which psychological predicates may be attached. "As a stage play *King Lear* is not 'conscious' of the ways in which something in its subject makes for its impossibility as normal theatre." "Sentimentality in art today is usually a matter of a work of art, or its interpreter, having decided on the correct attitude to strike, having come to an understanding of the way things really are." These seem ways of talking that are dispensable and without strong implications, at best a kind of shorthand, like "Downing Street is anxious" or "The *Quai d'Orsay* is suspicious". At other times Bayley talks quite easily about Shakespeare as author.

At the centre of *Shakespeare and Tragedy* is a hypothesis about the structures and effects of noble fictions which was first developed, and (in my view) stated more plainly and therefore more usefully, in Bayley's *The Uses of Division* (1976).

There it was argued, in respect of the work of some novelists and poets, and of some of Shakespeare's plays, that the mark of great work is a kind of disunity:

The clue that has come up constantly during my study and enjoyment of the writers who figure in this book is that of the involuntary divisions, amounting to a total disunity, which seems to characterize the reality of their art, and to make them what they are.

Total disunity seems a notion hard to apply. But the kinds of disunity Bayley has in mind are, for example, those exemplified in *Tristram Shandy* – the formal intention is to satirize Locke's logic and epistemology but the actual achievement is to transform the author's consciousness into a work of art; and the tugging and poking at us which constitute the reading of the work are consequences of the stretching between the two intentions. Again, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* the energy of Dickens's imagination flows sympathetically into Quilp, whereas those things in the novel that are held up for our approval, the institutions and norms of middle-class society, tend towards Quilp's destruction. A counter-example discussed is that of *Proust*, whose achievement, Bayley thinks, is greatly diminished by the conscious drive towards unity of theme and effect: "the drive towards stability and structure in Proust is too overwhelming; no chance of life remains for those accidents and divisions which keep the novel non-absolute; life abounds and flourishes in the parts but not in the projection of the whole." This may be not to give enough weight to *Charles* or to Proust's novel what Falstaff is to the *Henry IV* plays – and perhaps not enough weight to, say, Madame Verdurin or to Françoise; but the distinction between Proust and Dickens is clear enough and critically fruitful.

What holds of some novels holds also of Shakespeare's plays in that for us they have novels standing, as it were, behind them:

... it is only in our view, from the end of a long perspective of familiarity, that there lies behind each of his plays the shadow of a gigantic and seemingly limitless novel. The apothecary's shop in *Romeo and Juliet* lends us all for the moment the appetite and curiosity of a Balzac; the financial losses which that solid citizen, Dogberry, so characteristically shows off about, set us thinking along the lines of *Middlemarch* or *Little Dorrit*. Caliban might have been developed imaginatively by Dickens or analytically by Musil. Behind the swift passage of the plays there is time for whole lifetimes of events, formed by centuries of shaping speculation.

What seems to be a connected point is that, with the exception of *Titus Andronicus* and *Cressida*, "When we read Shakespeare we enter a natural world as well as one which is to be acted."

There is a conflict, then, between where the language of the play wants to take us and where the apprehended design – at least, in most of the tragedies – is calculated to take us. This conflict shows itself in the unsuitability of the tragic characters to their roles. This is argued at greatest length (in *Shakespeare and Tragedy*) in connection with *Lear*; and I shall stick to this discussion, both because it is a crucial case for Bayley's hypothesis and because *Lear*, by common consent, provides us with the deepest set of problems among the tragedies.

It is argued that such characters as *Lear* and Gloucester fail, in what they say, "to coincide" with tragedy. Their comments "hit the wrong note". This seems to be taken as intuitively clear in the cases cited, and plainer still if we compare the discourse of the leading characters in *Lear* with that of, say, Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. V v 31-42: Brutus is, as it were, in command of his role, knows what is going on, is able to express it in

## The Hooded Gods

Three male gods of healing, fertility and the underworld.  
From a long plaque in Housesteads Museum Hadrian's Wall.

These are the odds and sods among the gods, the other ranks, the omnipresences, the men, the women, the male midwives, the daily help from history's basement, the caretakers

who rarely come to light. They have become their deliv'rances, their manly hands, beneath notice and now beyond telling. They surface from the sleep of history.

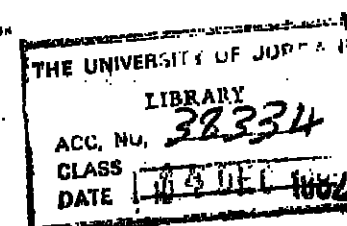
whose care suffices history like sleep, powers of recovery and repair who keep the middle watch, the graveyard shift, the seamstresses who knit up the ravelled sleeve.

Empire succeeds empire over their heads. The paces centuries set in the Wall have doubled under artillery wheels. Now low-flying Phantoms ghost from the stones.

Their histories are the interleaves, the pages happiness has written in white. They show as lapses in the chronicle, or specks of dialect in letters home.

No stars in their eyes. No shrieking either. These are the hard cure. These are the heart's wood. Three grey bottles still standing on the wall. Three pollards who can make a fist of green.

Roger Garfitt









Auden's life in the closer perfection of his art, but inevitably one notices omissions and spays facts more than the overall plan. His early poems are especially interesting since he quotes from poems which none of us can have seen before - this chilling verse, for instance:

Lonely did a mother tell him  
I'll be sad but not alone  
This half thought of angels  
And the other half of shit.

Yet the "poet-making" power of mother is not the whole story. Auden had great respect for his father from whom he believed he inherited his intellect. "Mother wouldn't like it" may have been one of his constant terms of disapproval, but I know from many reminiscences of his friends that he would emigrate avidly of people that their fathers did and what they felt for them.

Much of the unpublished verse which Carpenter prints is either poor or merely characteristic, but there are some unexpected gems. Consider this from a poem called "California" (a village near Birmingham). It dates from Auden's fifteenth year:

The twinkling lamps stream up the hill  
Past the farm and past the mill  
Right at the top of the road one sees  
A round mound like a Stilton cheese.  
A man could walk along that track  
Fetch the noun and bring it back  
Or gather stars up in his hand  
Like strawberries on English land.

Some of the lines edited out of *New Year Letter* are also thoroughly worth reading.

For maudlin stupid Mr Chips  
Owns several heavy battleships.  
Ridiculous young Lohengrin  
His camps to put his audience in  
Cher moueuvre Prudhomme aims in  
glorie

Le l'amour-propre et le pouvoir  
And the plain proletarian lie  
is held up in position by  
Noble police and the ornate  
Grandezza of the Russian State.

But whatever the interest of such discoveries, most readers will rightly feel that the centre of Carpenter's book is its account of Auden's relationship with Chester Kallman. This "marriage" was the most serious thing which ever happened to Auden, just as John Donne's marriage was in his life. Carpenter treats it with insight and

understanding, and if he shows how much suffering Kallman's unfaithfulness caused Auden, he doesn't underestimate the high price Kallman paid for living in tandem with Auden. Whatever Kallman's gifts might have amounted to ordinarily, there can be no doubt that he was perpetually eclipsed by Auden. Kallman's qualities are to be seen not just in passages from *The Rake's Progress* (viz the auction scene and graveyard scene in Act Three), but peep out in anecdote, recorded conversation and in such comments as this one from a letter about their Henze opera *The Barbers*: Kallman explained that they didn't want to produce "any species of that Gluckian Greekness which permits itself to be staged by combining the Modern Dance with the side-views of a Grecian Urn".

The tumult of love-betrayed scared Auden and is probably the reason for his reputation of the unconvincing litany of his good fortune and happiness in later years. As Carpenter asserts, his most successful relationship was probably with his art. This did not maintain itself at its previous high level towards the end, but nor was it something he felt tempted to turn his back on. It is true that Auden was very tired and despairing just before he died, but even here the loyal reader has two texts to choose from and may guess which is the more relevant. The first comes from "Talking to Myself":

Time, we both know, will decay You,  
and already  
I'm scared of our divorce: I've seen  
some horrid ones.  
Remember: when *Le Bon Dieu* says to  
you *Leave him!*  
please, please, for His sake and mine,  
pay no attention  
to my piteous *Don'ts*, but bugger off  
quickly.

The second is from "Lullaby":

Now you fondle  
your aimless, ordinary flesh  
with methodical satisfaction,  
imagining that you are  
sinless and all-sufficient  
sing in the den of yourself,  
*Madonna and Bambino*:  
*Sing, Big Baby, sing lullaby.*

Auden was a double man right to the end, but there is nothing ambiguous about the love his readers feel for him.

## Fifty years on . . .

In the leading article in the TLS of July 2 1931, Virginia Woolf wrote about the *Brownings*, and in particular about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. The Waves was published that year, and Virginia Woolf concentrated her piece on the merits of the "novel-poem" over the prose novel:

"Aurora Leigh," the novel-poem, is not the masterpiece that it might have been. . . . Stimulating and boring, ungainly and elegant, monstrous and exquisite all by turns, it overflows with whistles and howls; but, nevertheless, it still commands our interest and inspires respect. For it becomes clear as we read that, whatever Mrs Browning's faults, she was one of those rare writers who risk themselves adventurously and disinterestedly in an imaginative life which is independent of their private lives and demands to be considered apart from personalities. Her intention survives much that is faulty in her practice. Abridged and simplified from Auden's argument in the fifth book, that theory runs something like this. The sole work of poets, she said, is to present their own age, not Chaucer's. More passion takes place in drawing-rooms than in battles. Cry out for togetherness and the picturesque. Is it not foolish too? For living art presents and records real life, and the only life we can truly know is our own. But what form, she asks, can a poem on modern life take?

If Mrs Browning meant by a novel-poem a book in which character is closely and subtly revealed, the relations of many hearts laid bare, and a story unfurling unfolded, she failed completely. But if she meant rather to give us a sense of life in general, of people who are unmistakably Victorian, wrestling with the problems of their own time, all bright, unadorned, intensified, and connected by the fire of poetry, she succeeded. Aurora Leigh, with her passionate

interest in social questions, her conflict as artist and woman, her longing for knowledge and freedom, is the true daughter of her age. . . . The broader aspects of what it felt like to be a Victorian are seized as surely and stamped as vividly upon us as in any novel by Trollope or Mrs Gaskell.

And indeed if we compare the prose novel and the novel-poem the triumphs are by no means all to the credit of prose. As we rush through page after page of narrative in which dozen scenes that the novelist would smooth out separately are pressed into one, in which pages of deliberate description are fused into a single line, we cannot help feeling that the poet has outpaced the prose writer. Her page is packed with its full as his. Characters, too, if they are not shown in conflict but snipped off and summed up with something of the exaggeration of a caricaturist, have a heightened and symbolic significance which prose with its gradual approach cannot rival. The general aspects of things, markets, sunsets, scenes in church, owing to the compressions and elisions of poetry have a brilliance and a continuity which mock the prose writer and his slow accumulations of careful detail. For these reasons, "Aurora Leigh" remains, with all its imperfections, a book that still lives and breathes and has its being. . . . We laugh, we protest, we complain of its absurdities, but - and this, after all, is a great tribute to a writer - we read to the end enthralled. The best compliment that we can pay "Aurora Leigh" however, is that it makes us wonder why it has left no successors. Surely the street, the drawing-room, are promising subjects; modern life is worthy of the muse. But the rapid sketch which Elizabeth Barrett Browning flung off when she rushed into the drawing-room and met face to face the humanity of her age remains unfinished. The conservatism or the timidity of poets still leaves the chief spoils of modern life to the novelist. We have no novel-poem of the age of George the Fifth.

## Doing one's bit for China

By W. J. F. Jenner

YUAN-TSUNG CHEN:  
*The Dragon's Village*

285pp. Women's Press. £3.50.  
0 7143 3865 3

In the poorest parts of China peasant life is so harsh that it is very hard to write about it truthfully there. Apart from such considerations as the taboos imposed by authority, how can the horrors of extreme poverty be put into print without hurting the dignity of the victims and the pride of the nation? One of the best things about recent Chinese fiction has been that writers have at last been allowed to touch on rural hunger and backwardness; and although this sort of uncomfortable honesty is now under attack as treasonous, anti-socialist, anti-party and anti-Mao, it will be harder in future to pretend that the problems do not exist.

It took years of living in America to enable Yuan-tsung Chen to write her fictionalized account of the experiences of an eighteen-year-old girl from a rich Shanghai family who in 1950 goes off in a surge of enthusiasm to do her bit for revolutionary change in a village in the remote province of Gansu. The shock of the encounter is no less for her than it would be for a girl from London or New York: though she shares a more or less common language with

the peasants, they live in a world much further removed from hers than the thousand miles or so that separates them on the map.

Writers in modern China have dealt mainly with the politics of the Communist-run land redistribution campaigns of the late 1940s and early 1950s, underplaying the human factors involved. Where Mrs Chen's book is most effective is in conveying the physical and mental impact on the young narrator of a village so poor that the main food is husk-filled gruel, and even the "feudal" landlords, the class enemies that the city people have been drafted in to fight against, scarcely seem rich. A centuries-wide gulf of incomprehension keeps peasants and city-bred cadres from really understanding each other. When the narrator starts putting the instructions in her political manuals into practice the results can be horrifying. Some of the landlords have been unrepentant tyrants in their time, and remain dangerous enemies to the new order. But the methods that she and other members of her work-team use against them are often clumsy, unjust or cruel, and lead in one case to the suicide of an innocent man and in another to the gang rape of a landlord's young daughter.

Such doubts aside, *The Dragon's Village* will for many Western readers be a much easier way of approaching an otherwise hardly accessible area of history than would, for example, the more profound and thoroughgoing account of land reform offered by William Hinton in *Fanshen*. Fine writing this is not; but the vividly conveyed experience contained in it makes it a book well worth having.

This is a book full of harsh reality, drawing on the author's own experiences and those of others to create a number of vivid and moving

## Getting the bird in Turkey

By Peter Lewis

YASHAR KEMAL:

*The Saga of a Seagull* -  
Translated from the Turkish by Thilda Kemal  
250pp. Collins and Harvill. £6.95.  
0 00 261748 X

For the most part modern Turkish literature remains a closed book: publishers have been conspicuously reluctant to commission translations. The contemporary Turkish writer who has most successfully broken through this barrier is Yashar Kemal, whose prize-winning first novel *Memed, My Hawk* was a best-seller in Turkey in 1955 and soon won him an international reputation. Since then his steady stream of fiction has been translated into a number of languages, the person responsible for the English versions of his recent books, including the latest, *The Saga of a Seagull* (published in Turkey in 1976), being his wife Thilda.

To say that *The Saga of a Seagull* is about an eleven-year-old boy who adopts as a pet a young seagull with broken wing might suggest some embarrassing piece of sentimental whimsy built on the child-plus-animal formula. Alternatively, it might suggest a modish, cynically ghoulish reversal of the predictable formula. The opening, in which the boy Salih first finds a small dead coot on the beach and immediately afterwards discovers the damaged "baby seagull", does make for uneasy reading, since the child's naive philosophizing about death, and the repetitions of the word "baby", have an ominously goosy ring to them. Similarly, repeated mentions of "the little town" are far from reassuring because of the fairy-tale punance of "little" in this context. Is the formula going to triumph hands down over Kemal? Fortunately not, although he does walk an emotional tightrope none too steadily for the first few chapters.

This early part of the novel concentrates on Salih's successful attempt to keep the injured bird alive and his less successful attempt to find someone able to repair its broken wing or even understand his sympathetic identification with the gull. Birds have long featured symbolically in folklore and literature (Coleridge's "altabloss, Ibsen's wild duck, Chekhov's seagull), and Kemal exploits the symbolic potential of the young seabird incorp-

able of flight to evoke the situation of Salih himself, a loner trapped in a difficult family situation where he is constantly at war with his histrionic and warped grandmother whom he mortally offended by ridiculing the pipedream that sustains her. Yet the contrast is not simply between helplessness and power. Salih groves to be determined, courageous, and resilient, as well as highly imaginative. Faced with the family verdict that the bird will die, and with his grandmother's sadistic gleam at the prospect, the contrast is more properly between innocence and experience, between child-like faith in possibility and adult scepticism born of defeats and eroded sensibilities.

At this point, fairly early in the narrative, Kemal interpolates a long and leisurely flashback lasting nearly half the novel. This presents a somewhat younger Salih at a time when he is obsessed with an expensive toy lorry he sees in a shop and cannot hope to buy or have bought for him. After various efforts to raise money, he resorts to stealing it from the wealthy boy whose father has bought the toy. The setting is a busy Black Sea fishing town - a very different milieu from Kemal's of the cotton-producing plains of Chukurova where he comes from. In presenting the world as seen by Salih, the novel conveys the extraordinary mixture of fantasy and reality in which he lives. To some extent Salih inhabits an Arabian Nights world of magic, legend, and the supernatural, but this merges with his everyday reality so that the two interpenetrate in quasi-surrealist ways. His awareness of reality (as the pirate, as he prefers to call them) is at times subsumed into the romantic adventure, but Salih also registers the ordinary world as a place of menace and danger.

Immediately after the extended flashback, there is a crucial incident when Salih throws away his old toys, including the once-revered lorry. He is discarding part of his childhood and accepting his new commitment to the seagull as a recognition of his own responsibilities as a maturing individual. His persistent efforts to find someone able or willing to mend the broken wing are eventually fruitless, but only after a long trail of disillusionment around most of the singularly helpless and uninterested people in the town most likely to assist - vet, doctor, pharmacist. With few exceptions, the portrait of provincial - and not just provincial - Turkish society

that emerges from the novel is one of callousness, human blindness, mindless cruelty, and widespread corruption. Young right-wing thugs give Salih a terrible beating because he is wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt given to him by a tourist, although he has no idea who the portrait is of. The son of a wealthy and powerful man is immune from the law even though he deliberately runs down and kills a child in the street. Salih's hero, Metin, is gunned down at the end by an unnamed Colonel and his men when he challenges the Colonel's grossly unfair financial control of their smuggling enterprise. As a final embodiment of man's destructive potential, the completely covered seagull is killed by Salih's grandmother, here a representative of the older generation and its stifling power.

The principal symbol of freedom and imaginative flight is thus destroyed. Yet Salih remains undefeated, even when he suffers the disappointment of failing to catch the fishing boat he believes will take him to Istanbul and liberty. His creativity, his Blakean energy, survive, and in his modest way he achieves a triumph over his environment: the novel ends with him joining the blacksmith Ismail in the smithy to commence his apprenticeship in this "holy craft and art of the technician, would be day of the Prophet David, peace be upon him". The final image of Salih hammering the red-hot iron symbolizes his new-found maturity as he seeks to find an outlet for his creative energy through work in the real world. Since Kemal has taken a good look at the worst, there is no facile optimism, cheap sentimentality, or naive humanism in his moving and positive conclusion - but rather a hard-won belief in the ability of goodness and love to endure.

Launched in January 1968, at a cost to subscribers of 2s 6d (plus 3d postage) per issue, the little magazine *Sampirke* has gradually established itself as one of the best outlets for contemporary poetry in this country. Now, however, with its fortieth issue (available from Heronshead, Fish Pond Lane, Holbrook, Ipswich at 60p), the magazine has decided to close. In a farewell note, the founder-editors Michael Butler and Kemble Williams suggest that they are winding up *Sampirke* not because of financial difficulty (since 1972 the magazine has had steady Eastern Arts support) but because they have found it increasingly hard to keep the magazine small: originally local and East Anglian in character, it now has a world-wide circulation.

## On the steps of Russian realism

By Valentine Cunningham

MICHAEL MOORCOCK:

*Byzantium Endures*  
40pp. Seeker and Warburg. £6.95.  
0 436 28458 8

"It is hard", Randall Jarrell once said, "to write even a competent naturalistic story, and when you have written it what happens - someone calls it a competent naturalistic story." *Byzantium Endures* is a competent naturalistic novel, about the Ukraine, the Russian Revolution and the ensuing Civil War. Its subject is *echt* twentieth century. "I am a child of my century and as old as the century." I was born in 1900, on 1 January": thus refugee memoirist Colonel Pyat, old clothes merchant of London's Portobello Road (rhyming by the way with the narrator of Salman Rushdie's recent *Midnight's Children*: as old as modern India, born on the stroke of her independence). But for all the modernity of his matter, Pyat's manner wouldn't have seemed too anis in the nineteenth century.

Michael Moorcock is, of course, extraordinarily prolific. And here he is displaying unflinching versatility as well, zipping nimbly across the fiction-scape from Sci-Fi to FI, outdistancing the generality of authors, who usually take all their time just settling down at only one of those resorts. And his gear change, from the future we've got used to his being at, to the recent past of this novel, has gone astoundingly smoothly. What's more, there's no ginsaying the exotic animation of the scene he's touched down on: Odessa gangsters, St Petersburg bohemians, revolutionary brigands, Trotsky's mistress, drugs, sex, war, great glories of stage-bios, letting the grim rise of the Steel Tsar Stalin. But still it does all rather come out as, well, not much more than gingered-up Melvyn Bragg.

Admittedly, Michael Moorcock's Bragg does have - and it's a relief to get discovering so - a good deal of ginger in it. But one thought feeling quite at home in the technique, would be pleased at its zestful application to modern themes. Colonel Pyat's eye has been educated by the sort of movie that made realism stay exciting: his narrative pauses at the very Odessa steps that were to become so memorable in *Battleship Potemkin*. Pyat, who claims to be an engineer - educated in gadgetry of all sorts - who is obsessed by inventions, besotted by bicycles and planes, enjoys a lucky fit between his enthusiasms and the age of the conceptual apotheosis of the train. Zola's means come most aptly alive again amidst Pyat's mechanistically aesthetic charms - the Futurists, at the moment of train-borne Trotskyism.

Agreeably, Pyat's affection for detail is not always doggedly plodding. Moorcock can't emulate Günter Grass, nor even Salman Rushdie. In their continual use of the inventively odd angle, the revealing connexion but there are moments at least where he Grasses very nicely on history. Pyat, Jewish-looking child and self-proclaimed inventor of the auto-gyro, lies high over Kiev's Babi gorge, where later, in the German death-camp there, "so many Jewish souls were to fly to Heaven". Odessa, we're told, was packed with people selling food, drinks, charts, papers: "How Russia was full of men, women and children with trays around their necks in those days". Hooked on cocaine, Pyat is eager to demonstrate that the "entire Revolution, that entire Civil War, was fought on 'snow'". We get Stalin watching Mickey Mouse films in a huge Kremlin kino, "while Russia died at his command". A crazed anarchist divebombs an Odessa church armed with a Fabergé hour-glass. Russia empties out into the world a crowd of chefs - and waters-to-be, dispensers of Chicken à la Kielf. Boeuf Stroganoff and Strawberry Romanoff. The Cheka's machine-guns "go cheka-cheka-cheka" just to prove what mercy meant: a quick death rather than a slow one.

But, alas, for every arresting detail, there are paragraphs of mere cata-

logue: lists of what's to eat, what's in apartments, rooms, bars, dives, wagons-lits, what's on station platforms and quay-sides, what people are wearing. Moorcock does the Russian men-turn very fetchingly: "The variety of bortsches, and yushkas, the kuleshnik, the schipanka, the zntirka, kulish and rassolnik, the herrings and boiled sturgeon and sardines, the roast meat with sauerkraut and prunes and buckwheat hash". He's clearly learned a lot from the likes of Konstantin Paustovsky. (Paustovsky's *Story of a Life* is praised in a historical Appendix on the Russian Civil War.) Paustovsky's wallow in rich Russian particularity represented, however, the blowy ultra-decadence of a style. Moorcock's novel has fallen precisely by falling for largely overripe literary fruit.

Overripe of all things in *Byzantium Endures* is its narrator, Colonel Pyat, or Dimitri Pyatinski, alias Dimitri Mitrofanovitch Kryshevitch, alias Maxim Arturovitch Pyatinski, self-exculpating *moralistic* and man of violence, is an egregiously senile boaster. His talents, according to himself, abound. They don't include the talent to amuse. He's good, he says, at languages. His narratives of Odessa life outshine Isaac Babel's. His dystopianism is more original than Huxley's (or Orwell's). If people had only heeded his gush of inventiveness he'd be as famous as Einstein - and anyway Einstein sneaked his assistant's ideas. Sikorski of the helicopters came from the Ukraine, but he had nothing on Pyat. Pyat anticipated, he crows, aeroplanes, rocket propulsion, aircraft carriers; he tried out lasers, musers, technological marvels galore. He also,

it turns out, forged his Diploma in Engineering. No unmitte Milton, in fact, ever seemed more inglorious. We quickly learn to invent all his claims and his disclaimers, to suspect his kept-up stories about his Cossack father and his denials of Jewishness, to wonder about his perpetual hostility towards homosexuals, Semites and members of the Secret Police. And we're made really to suffer his insufferable tirades.

As the "editor" of Pyat's memoir (who signs himself "Michael Moorcock") admits, Pyat's "was not a pleasant personality, and his intolerance and passionately-held right-wing views were hard to take". Jews, Roman Catholics, Bolsheviks, Muslims, the BBC, queers, the Hebrew God, people on housing estates: they're all scathed in burst after burst of hotly furious prose. First Holy Russia, then Great Britain on the Pyat reading, the darkly barbarian hordes of the East, senitic, Carthaginian, have invaded and destroyed the sacred courts of civilization, Byzantium, the Holy Empires of the Christ of the Greeks.

Pyat's irate paragraphs persuade only as boiling oil or rubber truncheons persuade. As he raves he becomes as bleakly unlovable as any old con. If only, one keeps thinking, one didn't have to sit through quite so much of his rabid rubbish. If only, as well, one didn't get the occasional feeling that, while the fear that the real experience of his life is more fully embodied in Eva, her mother, who is laid out like a waxwork dummy in her geriatric ward, sucking on a plastic tube.

## Miraculous births

By Helen McNeil

MARY GORDON:

*The Company of Women*  
291pp. Cape. £6.50.  
0 224 01955 4

*The Company of Women* is a symbolic meditation disguised as a realistic Bildungsroman. Mary Gordon's study of faith, love and charity begins with four Catholic women, the girl Felicitas, and their priest Father Cyprian all poised in an ecstasy of hope:

... the child was their hope. It was a queer life that Felicitas would have, a hard life, but how fortunate, Elizabeth thought, to be like Mary, Martha's sister, like Felicitas, the favored one, the chosen.

By the end of the novel, Felicitas has grown up, had an illegitimate child, and apparently failed to fulfil her early promise. On a deeper level her worldly failure has only confirmed why Felicitas was "called after the one virgin martyr whose name contained some hope for ordinary human happiness". By choosing to live a life of saintly ordinariness, she illuminates the lives of her mother, godmothers and priest, and leads them to accept their coming deaths. "I have never been happier in my life", thinks Elizabeth, "I will die happy". Father Cyprian, like Felicitas, has an apparent failure, feels himself ready to "leave it all behind me, in the hands of God, in the hands of a girl". When Felicitas embraces her iconic Marian role as mother of a child "with two fathers", the mantle of hope can pass on to her daughter Linda, "superior to all other girls her age in beauty, grace, and wisdom". In serene ignorance, Linda and Father Cyprian pray secretly for the ordination of women in their lifetime.

Mary Gordon offers enough information in *The Company of Women* to indicate the limiting ironies in Felicitas's choice. Felicitas believes that love is a means of self-protection, and she is about to marry a stupid man for the safety of his silence. It is not enough to be saved; she needs to be safe too. The entire structural and stylistic thrust of *The Company of Women* moves in the

opposite direction, however, away from irony and towards lyrical sincerity. Mary Gordon accomplishes the high-impossible task of convincing us that women can still derive happiness from the Catholic church's traditional image of their role. All this happiness is hard to take, when it entails living a life in which nothing new will ever happen again. Part of the price *The Company of Women* extracts from its readers is acceptance of a serenely ominous life: the novel itself also undergoes a peculiar levelling, establishing calm by a controlled, slow pace, symmetry, flat characters, and a nominative prose laden with appositions and variations. It resonates with wisdom in its discursive passages, and its characters' meditations have an almost reactionary lucidity, as if modernist fragmentation and stream of consciousness were aberrations that one can now do without. By her choice of life Felicitas similarly "erases" abortions, the 1960s and dogs called Bob, Che, and Jesus: she has her baby, moves to a small town in upstate New York, and rechristens the miserable dogs Joe, Jay and Peaches.

Mary Gordon is least successful in her depiction of Felicitas's life in history (university radicalism in the 1960s, hippie life style and so on). Felicitas's experience of the world, the flesh, and the devil is depicted with heavy satire; she falls for a relentlessly minor devil of a professor who prays to "St Herbert" Marcuse and keeps a commune of grovelling girlfriends which demonically parodies Father Cyprian's company of secular virgin martyrs. Like Luis Buñuel's saintly Viridiana, whose collapse into the merely human is shown by her sheer need for other people's company, Felicitas needs Robert's body and loses herself so as to give him a strictly incidental pleasure.

In this middle phase of the novel, Felicitas is following an "education narrative". *Final Payments*, Mary Gordon's first novel, was a genuine Bildungsroman, moving from stasis to progress; the heroine's bout of humility was delusive and self-destructive. In *The Company of Women* one of the author's most powerful meditations is about what constitutes the story of a woman. When Felicitas is filled with teenage pride and prejudice, she addresses Jane Austen and foolishly identifies with Elizabeth Bennet: mean-

## Blackpool flights

By David Nokes

ELIZABETH TROOP:

*Darling Daughters*  
252pp. Granada. £6.95.  
0 246 11458 4

MARGARET POWELL:

*Maid and Mistresses*  
192pp. Michael Joseph. £6.50.  
0 7181 2023 X

For over a decade women novelists have been asserting the central significance of their experiences as women, yet, on the evidence of these novels, the habits of self-doubt and deference are a long time dying. The heroines of both books are timid spectators of lives which seem to take place beyond their reach or control. Like children spying on an adult world, they offer keyhole perspectives on existences they are ashamed to acknowledge.

Elizabeth Troop chooses a clumsy "novel within a novel" frame for her story. Her heroine, Kate, is a highly self-conscious novelist whose latest autobiographical work is being adapted for television. With a mixture of envy and relief, Kate hands over responsibility for acting out her own life to Abigail, a mobile and energetic young feminist from the RSC, while secretly fearing that the real experience of her life is more fully embodied in Eva, her mother, who is laid out like a waxwork dummy in her geriatric ward, sucking on a plastic tube.

The setting for *Darling Daughters* is Blackpool, though Elsie "had never bothered to penetrate the vulgar parts of the town, with the tower erect over the central beach". This phallic structure is the presiding symbol of rejected maleness in the book, a maleness that is both intimidating and irrelevant. Sarah's father, a failed Labour candidate, is chased from the house by her grandmother, a formidable matriarch clad in her armour of hie stockings and tight corsets, who maintains a tyrannous regime of household duties, sanctified by a tireless litany of moralizing proverbs. Mad Jack the flasher, his raincoat stained with Milky Way, is all that remains of the repudiated male, as the experiences of the book are handed on, in an attenuated and joyless succession, down the female line. For a while poetry seems to offer an escape from this inheritance, but Sarah's Tolstoyan poet, Lev, proves as unreliable as all the other men in the book. Incapable of distancing her readers' reactions, Mrs Troop plants a judgment on *Darling Daughters* by having Kate's TV producer remark of Blackpool: "Immense, that's what it has, and vulgarity, but honest with it. It's a bit like you - and the book." Such compulsive elbow-nudging is Kate's neurotic reaction to a childhood whose domestic routines were made secure by Vick's vapour rub, and Chilprute vests.

For Mrs Green, the cook in Margaret Powell's *Maid and Mistresses*, Blackpool means not innocence, but independence. It is there that she goes, to set up as a seaside landlady, after a lifetime in service. This latest instalment in Mrs Powell's seemingly endless evocations of the below-stairs world of the 1920s is characteristically lightweight and sentimental. Its chirpy tone is resolutely set against discovering any of the social realities of the world that it purports to present. The adolescent heroine, Etta, is an ideally dutiful kitchen maid in an ideally happy household. Attractive and intelligent, she has her portrait painted by a fashionable society artist, and while still only seventeen is promoted to the rank of full cook.

It is work of fantasy, with just the lightest smattering of anecdotal humour to stiffen the syllabus. The novel is written with the stunted correctness of someone whose language has been acquired at a remove from experience. Etta's fastidious attention to her own and her master's crumbs of politeness from the great house table. Yet it often seems to be the author, not her heroine, who is on tip-toe to be genteel. "Etta hated standing around in the street, the cynosure of errand boys, and often of their ribald remarks and whistles." Here, surely, is Margaret Powell herself who is at pains to express correct sentiments in correct language. What *Maid and Mistresses* interestingly demonstrates, despite its own more trivial intentions, is that it was partly by making servants ashamed of their own language and experiences that the upper classes ensured the hierarchy below-stairs was every bit as rigid and formal as that above.

Originally published in 1960, when Prize of Amis gave it its "first-novel prize of the year", Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* has just been re-issued by Weidenfeld (188pp. £6.50, 0 297 77981 4). Other recent reissues include paperback editions of three novels by Angela Carter: *The Bloody Chamber* and *Heroes and Villains* (King Penguin, £1.95 each) and *The Magic Toyshop* (Virago, £2.50).



## The uncertainties of Ottawa

By H. S. Ferns

ROBERT BOTHWELL, IAN DRUMMOND, JOHN ENGLISH: Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism. 489pp. University of Toronto Press. \$12.00. 0 8020 2417 3

R. KENNETH CARTY and W. PETER WARD (editors): Entering the Eighties in Crisis. 101pp. Oxford University Press. Paperback, \$2.95. 0 19 540364 9

In the 1920s, as the revolution was drawing to its end, a simple-minded Mexican said, "Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States!" A similar remark might be made about Canada as the Canadians face up to the consequences of forty years of profound change brought about not by revolutionary bloodshed but by productivity and prosperity.

When Canada declared war "at Britain's side" in 1939, the Canadians were still a religious people, not just in the sense that they were churchgoers, but morally and intellectually. No serious politicians and very few educated people espoused ideas not rooted in the truths to be found in the teaching of the Christian churches - Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox - and the synagogues. Political differences still had a sectarian Irish and reformation flavour, and even the socialists, few in number, were for the most part Christians of the United Church variety. Radical politicians like William Abernethy were more often than not fundamentalists. Dissidents in Quebec were men of God as much as men of the people. Maurice Duplessis may have despised bishops and fought with archbishops, but he went to Mass regularly and ordered a large crucifix to be placed in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly in Quebec City. Those well acquainted with Maurice considered this "smug politics," but it was also a recognition that sacred symbolism was still as important for political success as patronage and government contracts.

Even as Duplessis was hanging up his crucifix and making fun of the Jews, the disposition of Canadians, no matter what language they spoke, was rapidly changing. Ten years of depression and five years of war revolutionized their ideas of what life is about and what one wants from it. Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English write:

In 1944 the Canadian Chamber of Commerce undertook to look into the future. It polled Canadians in Kitchener and Vancouver to discover what they hoped for and expected at war's end. The responses indicated a desire for a richer material life: refrigerators, cars, and a house in the suburbs. Possibly because they were not asked they did not express a desire for a new constitution, world government, or international workers' solidarity. They did not get any of these things, but they did get refrigerators, cars, and a house in the suburbs, not to mention television sets, snowmobiles, and microwave ovens. They also got family allowances, unemployment insurance, health insurance, and contributory old age pensions. Economic progress nullified these things possible. The period from 1945 to 1980 was one of almost uninterrupted economic growth whose benefits were widely shared among all levels of Canadian society and in all regions.

When the war ended there was no grand To Do in Canada. VE Day was a strange experience; for the jubilation was also tinged with a current of dread. Would the wartime prosperity come to an end, and the days of unemployment and the harsh struggle for survival soon return? Canadians longed for the good life, and they defined it in very material terms. This united them in a very compelling way, which transcended the barriers of language, religion and class.

With his preternatural capacity for sensing the feelings of the people, Prime Minister Mackenzie King had anticipated the requirements for the political survival at the war's end of his party and administration. This meant more initiative in peacetime on the part of Government than anything he or anyone else in Canada had ever dreamed of. Canada embarked on an experiment in Keynesian economic and fiscal management which enjoyed a phenomenal success.

The war itself provided the experience and created the confidence which enabled the politicians to accept advice about economic and fiscal policy which none of them wholly approved of or even understood. At the centre of this policy-making were the deputy minister of finance, Clifford Clark, W. A. Mackintosh, Graham Towers (Governor of the Bank of Canada), K. B. Bryce and Alex Siskind. The war demonstrated that Canada had a productive capacity, and a parallel capacity to bear a burden of taxation and lending to the public authorities, beyond what anyone could reasonably have anticipated in the years of depression. It was the object of these economic technicians to devise a policy which could replace the demand created by war with a demand function sufficiently strong to run the economy effectively in peacetime.

These men were not "free lunch" economists of the kind at whom Milton Friedman and F. A. Hayek point accusing fingers. For them the key to prosperity was state, but most by private business. As far as consumer demand was concerned they approached this cautiously. A big handout along the lines of the Beveridge Report (Canada produced a parallel Marsh Report) was rejected, but Clark was enthusiastic about family allowances and a generous programme of education and retraining for demobilized members of the Armed Forces. This was a mix of the politicians and particularly Mackenzie King, found just right: electorally appealing to the mass of the people and satisfactory to business interests. The prospect of every family receiving cash directly from the Federal Government was a sure-fire electoral asset to the Liberals.

Canada's economic policy advisers, like Keynes himself, assumed that governments and politicians are rational beings and capable of running an economy sensibly by a system of cyclical budgeting: stimulating demand and investment when employment is falling and restraining them when employment is rising towards 96-100 per cent of the work force.

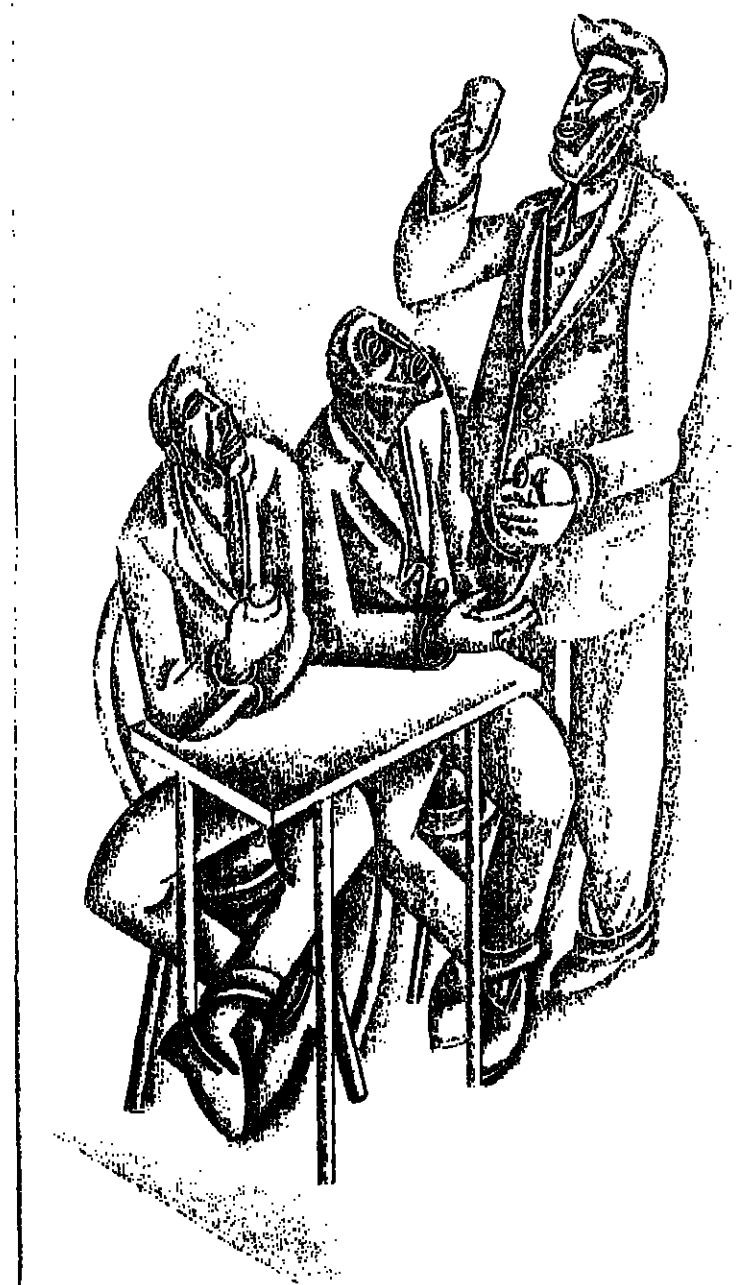
The history of Canada since 1945 as told by Messrs Bothwell, Drummond and English strongly suggests that the Keynesian assumption that politicians, bureaucrats and the people generally are rational and capable of enlightened self-interest is unsound. Politicians want power and bureaucrats want jobs and empires. Their need to recruit political support causes them to forget the necessary conditions for enduring economic stability and success. And so they "overspend." Governments become overblown. Public services become more systems of income distribution than they are services. The Canadian Post Office, for example, delivers letters more slowly than in the days of steam and parcels more slowly than in the days of rail, but the postal employees do well, and they go on strike whenever they think their incomes are not appropriate to their station in life.

Happiness, political unity, and civility are at best vague and uncertain concepts. It is pretty clear, however, that prosperity in Canada has not contributed markedly to producing heaven on earth in the northern half of North America. There are twice as many Canadians as there were forty years ago. They live longer and individually they consume more than they have ever done. They travel more. They have more opportunities for education and recreation than ever before. They have fewer inhibitions. They help to feed the Russians and the Chinese. They do not seem to do much harm to other people. Judging by their rhetoric they do not appear to like their American neighbours very much, but they cooperate with them in everything that matters to both of them. But ...?

The essays in *Entering the Eighties: Canada in Crisis* are worried up to a point: maybe Canada as a political community is going to fall apart. One of them, Michael Bliss, questions the wisdom of "too much government." His title encapsulates his case. "Rich by Nature, Poor by Policy: the State and Economic Life in Canada." The very existence of ten provincial governments and one federal government competing among themselves for the allegiance, money and resources of the community is the root of the problem. Bliss likens the addiction to government to the cigarette habit, fatal for some and debilitating for all.

Canada since 1945 lends some support to this argument. Obviously the smoothly running nation over which Louis St Laurent presided from 1948 to 1957 is no longer "too good to be true." Looking back with the advantage of hindsight one can discern certain fortuitous factors which made it possible for the Ottawa mandarins and their political masters to do so well for more than a decade after the end of World War Two. They were, for example, able to apply the Keynesian prescriptions for economic management rationally and consistently because they had few political problems. The provincial governments were then still weak and unlearned in the ways of bureaucratic politics. The initiative in economic matters was still the prerogative of the federal government.

Once, however, the economy was working well, the provincial governments began to flourish, to employ more skillful staffs and particularly to exercise the power which are rightfully and constitutionally theirs under the British North America Act. More and more the Federal Government lost the power to control public spending, and more and more were the provincial politicians able to mobilize political support demanding costly services in health, education, transportation and welfare, which the federal government was expected to support either by subsidies or by according the provinces the opportunity to tax and spend. This did not happen just in the



"The Toast", 1923, a pencil drawing by William Roberts which is part of the Maclean Gallery's annual "Summer Portfolio" of paintings, drawings and prints, at 35 St George Street, London WC2R 9FA until July 31.

case of Quebec but everywhere.

The federal leaders, whether Diefenbaker or Pearson, were not equal to this new state of affairs. Diefenbaker was an emotional populist and no administrator; Pearson was weak and much disposed to walk away from situations he could not face. For ten years Ottawa was soft at the top.

The same cannot be said of the present Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau. No politician without a public opinion could have dealt with the terrorist infection in the way he did in October, 1970. But Trudeau has the defects of his virtues. He is an intellectual and an aristocrat indifferent to economic problems and little disposed to understand them. As a result, the Canadian economy is more or less out of control. Even bureaucrats in Ottawa are beginning to face up to the need to provide an income from the sale of government services. Witness *The Way Out*, written by two senior bureaucrats, A.R. Bailey and D. G. Hull, sponsored and published by an organization the chairman of which is the Clerk of the Privy Council of Canada (retired).

More seriously, Trudeau does not seem sufficiently to recognize that the centre of economic power in Canada is shifting away from Ontario and Quebec and that a new constitution imposed by sleight of hand in the interest of Toronto and Montreal will not work as it did when western Canada was a nearly empty colonial dependency of Ottawa and the Maritime Provinces were peopled by fishermen and farmers with little capacity to embrace the federal government.

New constitutional arrangements must take account of the fact that the western Canadians can turn off the gas taps and freeze the majority of Ontarians, who no longer have coal or wood-fired heating equipment. And now, being far from God, this is just what they might do if sufficiently provoked.

Finally, his father, who is an adept of a sect of python-worshippers, takes him, with his mother, on a journey into the forest to visit a sorcerer, a sort of pythoness, who lives with pythons in a hut specially constructed so that he can glide at will in and out of the hole she has made in the walls. After ceremonies and incantations, the boy, still quaking with horror, is released from the python spell in a very powerful dramatic scene, and is allowed to return home. He is healed. But his father promises to dedicate him to the python cult.

During his convalescence, the boy discovers a book about Greenland on the shelves of a missionary library in Lomé. At once he is fascinated by the idea of this distant land of snow and ice, so different from his own country. He reads as many books as he can find about Greenland and the Arctic, and studies atlases of the polar regions and northern Europe. He feels now that he has to escape from his home, and from the dedication to

based at the University of Manitoba is pleased to announce that it intends to publish an authoritative edition of his writings and papers. The editors will include all correspondence to Lord Selkirk, as well as all writings by him. We would be pleased to hear from any holders of Selkirk papers, particularly those located outside the major archives and libraries in Britain and North America, who would wish their material included in this edition.

J.M. Bumsted, General Editor; The Papers of Lord Selkirk; St John's College, The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada R3T 2M5.

## An equatorial among the Eskimos

By James Kirkup

TETE-MICHEL KPOMASSIE: L'Africain du Groenland. 309pp. Paris: Flammarion.

This is surely the most extraordinary book to come out of black Africa. It is the story of the author's boyhood and youth with his parents, relatives and twenty-six brothers and sisters in the bush and forests of Togoland. It goes on to tell of how, still a young boy, he escaped from his traditional, python-worshipping home and made his way all alone through Africa, Europe and a terrifyingly stormy Arctic Sea to the place of his dreams - Greenland, where he spent three years in the eternal snows, in the far north of the world's biggest island of ice almost penniless, sharing the daily (and nightly) life of the Eskimos or Inuit, as they should properly be called.

The book, written in a very fluent, candid style, is the work of a natural writer and a born observer of landscapes and men. It is divided into three parts. In Part One, the author describes his boyhood and youth in a traditional Togoland village, an account which, in my experience, has never been equalled for its vivid humour, excitement and poetry. In it he tells of happy hunting excursions for lizards, and exactly how they are caught. His adolescent companions would cook them to extract the fat, which is rubbed carefully on their penises, which it is supposed to make bigger and thicker and stronger.

But one day, while out gathering coconuts, Tété has a traumatic experience. At the top of a wind-blown coconut palm, he is suddenly confronted by an enraged python and her brood in their lofty nest. The boy is so petrified by terror, he can hardly move, but eventually begins scrambling down the trunk, the python after him. He manages to knock the python to the ground, but at once it starts gliding back up the trunk towards him, hissing and baring its fangs. In desperation, the boy throws himself from the tree and falls unconscious when he hits the ground.

Attracted by the screams he has been uttering, an uncle and a brother run to his help, see the disappearing python and assume that he has been mortally wounded by the reptile. The boy is covered with bruises, but no bones are broken. They carry him back to his hut, where his father tries to find where the python has bitten him: the boy is still unable to speak and tell of his ordeal. When he regains consciousness, he lies motionless and apathetic for a long time, despite various native remedies that are applied.

Finally, his father, who is an adept of a sect of python-worshippers, takes him, with his mother, on a journey into the forest to visit a sorcerer, a sort of pythoness, who lives with pythons in a hut specially constructed so that he can glide at will in and out of the hole she has made in the walls. After ceremonies and incantations, the boy, still quaking with horror, is released from the python spell in a very powerful dramatic scene, and is allowed to return home. He is healed. But his father promises to dedicate him to the python cult.

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the python-priestess - a prospect he views with disgust.

Pretending that he is only going on a short visit to a relative, he obtains his parents' consent to travel, just after his sixteenth birthday, to Port-Bouet, a few kilometres from Abidjan. He works his way there by helping the driver of a "taxi-brousse", a desert truck used for transporting goods and people in the wilds of Africa. He finds a temporary job in Abidjan, and his aunt wants to find him a girl and make him settle down there. But family life is not for this adventurer. He makes his way, with almost no money, and with incredible slowness and difficulty, doing odd jobs here and there, to Accra, capital of Ghana, where for a short while he works as a radio announcer for "The Voice of Ghana".

After a few months, he has earned enough money for a sea voyage from Takoradi to Dakar in Senegal, calling on the way at Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gambia. He arrives in Dakar with almost no money left. But with customary self-reliance and adaptability, he finds a post as translator at the Embassy of Ghana. He stays there only in order to save enough cash: after six months he gives in to his native and leaves for Mauritania, travelling from the capital, Nouakchott, by Land Rover to Port-Etienne (now known as Nuadibou). His plan was to cross the Sahara from there to Algiers, but when he finds that there is no longer any kind of transport available, and unwilling to cross the desert on foot, he returns to Dakar, where with typical acumen and enterprise he obtains a post at the Indian Embassy. Six months later, he again resigns his post, and with the money thus saved manages finally to get to Marseilles, and he gives a glowing and miraculous account of this, his first sight of European civilization.

He soon moves on to Paris, where he is befriended by various people. I think it is one proof of the author's extraordinary character and sunny disposition that everywhere he goes he makes friends. Indeed, people soon take to him, and love him, and he says that his last host in Paris, with whom he lived for one year, is his "other father." His life in Paris, and later in Bonn (staying one year with a German lady and her young cousin Carola, whom he had helped with their luggage at the station, and who spontaneously invited him to stay with them) is beautifully and humorously recounted. Finally, he moves to his last stepping-stone, Copenhagen.

Like many Africans, Tété is a clever linguist, and besides his native tongue and French he soon picks up German and Danish - just as later he will pick up the various languages of Greenland.

The second part of *L'Africain du Groenland* tells of the long sea voyage from Copenhagen on a cargo boat, through a terrible storm and into the gathering ice and cold of Arctic waters. Again he has very little money, though his "father" in Paris is to send him a small allowance every month. He does not possess adequate clothes, not much more than a couple of thick pullovers. His descriptions of the Arctic seas, afloat with ice and then drifting icebergs, are masterly, fresh, seen with a naive yet marvelously observant eye. He tells of the Arctic summer's lengthening days, of the midnight sun. The cold becomes so intense he can hardly breathe.

Then they pass Cape Farvel, in the extreme south of Greenland, and the ship enters the harbour of Julianehab, called by the Eskimos Kukurtoq, "the White Place", after the masses of drifting icebergs. A great crowd of Inuit is waiting to welcome the boat. They are laughing and shouting, and joking with

the crew and passengers. Tété has stayed below until the very last minute. As soon as he appears on deck, the crowd falls suddenly silent, the women lower their eyes at the sight of this black giant. But gradually they regain their friendly smiles, and come forward to welcome him with true Greenland hospitality. He hears them muttering compliments about him. But many of them, and especially the children, think he is a supernatural being - for one of their "spirits" living in the snowy mountains is a black man. However, Tété, with his good nature, big smile and wonderful friendliness, soon persuades them that he is human, and here, as in Africa and Europe, everyone takes to him at once, and all complete to offer him hospitality.

The rest of the book is a moving account of his friendship with the Inuit, a friendship so deep and so natural that it goes beyond all our western notions of morality. In true Eskimo fashion Tété is offered wives, sisters and daughters as his bed companions everywhere he wanders. He describes the man-

ness of the sunlit summer nights, the drunken parties, the village dances, the life of expropriated Danes, the sexual habits, the hunting and fishing, and always the extraordinary food - blubber mostly, whalemeat (raw), walrus fat, seal intestines, strips of dried reindeer meat, and particularly dog meat, the flesh of those "huskies" so romanticized by writers like Jack London, but here shown clearly in their true light, as vicious, quarrelling, bloodthirsty and child-eating.

The winter comes, and we are told of paralyzing snowstorms, of long treks with dog-team and sled across snow and ice between distant villages. And all the time, Tété persists in moving further and further north, in search of the "real" Inuit, those unspoiled by drink and western civilization.

The third part of the book describes how he finds his ideal in a very poor, deprived, anti-social and indeed desperate situation, suffering starvation, poverty, isolation from the community, and a terrible

boredom that nearly drives them mad. This part of the book provides a realistic and unforgettable climax. At the end, when Tété leaves to go back to Europe and Africa, the old, poverty-stricken outcast he has been living with turns his head away to hide his tears, and refuses to look back at the author boards the boat. A striking image of the depth of feeling, admiration and love this African generated everywhere he went.

The book has an excellent introduction by Jean Malaurie, well-known for his documentaries of the Arctic on French television, who makes the point that until now, all Arctic exploration has been from the side of the white man, often with disastrous results. This is the first example of a black man seeking the soul of the Inuit in the eternal snows, and finding his own, thus opening the way for future generations of non-white explorers, African and Oriental. This truly outstanding book is one that I literally could not put down until I had, to my great regret, finished it.

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# St Louis's gift to St Denis

By Patrick O'Connor

LYNN HANEY:  
Naked At the Feast  
A Biography of Josephine Baker  
336pp. Robson Books. £7.50.  
0 85051 140 5

D. ANTOINETTE HANDY:  
Black Women in American Bands  
and Orchestras  
319pp. The Scarecrow Press.  
(UK distributor, Bailey Bros and Swin-  
fen, Folkestone) £12.25.  
0 8108 1346 7

The last time Josephine Baker played a season in London, at the Palladium in 1974, Timm Murni interviewed her for *The Guardian* and headed the article "She danced the Charleston dressed in ostrich feathers, on a drum; she danced in the Folies Bergère clad in bananas; she saw a pregnant woman disem- bowelled; she won the Croix de Guerre." On that occasion she drew whoops of delight from the audience, whose ears had been buttered by the pop group in the first half of the programme, when she made her entrance on four-inch platform shoes, three elongated powder blue ostrich feathers nod- ding atop her turban. All the opera glasses on the backs of the seats had been removed and half- way through her performance Josephine stopped to point a finger towards the stalls and said, "Oh Madam, you are shocking me. Yes, you there fiddling around with those little glasses. Don't do it please. Keep your illusions!" Any illusions one may have had about her are dispelled on the first page of Lynn Haney's biography where she reads: "Her faults were on a grand scale - megalomania, unbridled egotism and wild squandering - faults that are beyond the imagination of le petit bourgeois. So they only saw the good things about Josephine. To them, she was a goddess."

The lives of actresses are inclined to fall either into the Cinderella category or that of "born in a trunk". Josephine was one of the former, the illegitimate daughter of an itinerant street musician and a waitress, her parents parted shortly after the birth of a second child. She grew up in St Louis which was the scene of the worst race riots the United States had so far known. Twice married by the age of fifteen, when she was already a veteran of two years in vaudeville, Josephine's second mother-in-law used to find excuses to keep her out of the way if vis- itors called. She was ashamed of Josephine's having darker hued skin than that of her own family. In the 1932 revue at the Casino de Paris she sang "Je voudrais être blanche pour moi quel bonheur!" and according to the impresario Paul Derval at one time she used to rub her skin with lemon in the hope of lightening it. All her life Josephine battled against those pre- judices which inflicted on her as a young girl wounds from which she never really recovered.

Following her first success in New York she was approached by Caroline Dudley who was planning to present the first all-black show in Paris. This was *La Revue Nègre* which opened at the Music Hall des Champs Élysées in October 1925. Just over a year later Josephine had acquired a bogus Italian count as her lover and manager, had starred in the first of many revues *à grand spectacle* at the Folies Bergère, and had opened her own *boîte de nuit*, Chez Josephine. In the rue Fon- taine, incidentally during the same month that La Cigale opened on the Boulevard Montparnasse, she was twenty years old. Such was her fame that it even reached the dining table in the rue de Fleurs where Alice B. Toklas named a dessert "Custard Josephine Baker." The main ingredient was, of course, bananas but it also called for three table spoons of Liqueur Raspail which was, Miss Toklas

advised when the recipe was pub- lished, "a liqueur for which it will probably be necessary to substitute another".

This book mixes the results of the author's research, which has produced a number of facts about Josephine Baker's life not to be found in the "official" versions, with stories enshrined by fifty years tel- ling and re-telling (some of which are very funny, whether accurate or not) and a certain amount of creative licence. "As the Paris- Berlin express crossed the border and cut through the rich German heartland... Josephine sitting with her pet snake Kiki dozing in a hatbox on her lap, stared out at the countryside and wondered what lay ahead." Well, no doubt she did, but this is the "art" of biography laid on a bit thick and I could have done with less of it.

Ms Haney makes much of Josephine having posed for Picasso, Van Dongen, Calder and others - but the artist who responded most readily to her as a model, who became as it were Toulouse-Laut- rec to her Jane Avril, was Paul Colin. He attended the rehearsals of *La Revue Nègre* and made a poster of Josephine to advertise the show, and shortly afterwards a second one for the annual *Bal Nègre*. As well as illustrating two volumes of her memoirs he became the first of Josephine's Parisian lovers. She appeared nearly every year until the outbreak of the war in a new revue either at the Casino or the Folies, but possibly her greatest triumph was the re- vival of Offenbach's *La Créole* given at the Théâtre Marigny in 1934. One of the works of Offenbach's final years, the title role had been created by Anna Judic, of whom Reynold Hahn wrote: "Elle a une voix petite voix et elle chante des chansons de jeune fille avec une telle grâce que pas une seconde on n'est pas choqué. Son tact est mou. Elle dit des chansons 'raides' aussi; mais elle les dit de la façon fine et légère" - these words could equally well describe Josephine Baker's singing in the 1920s and 1930s.

"Josephine goes to war" is a great theme which has already been exploited to the full by her companion Jacques Abtey, who recruited her for the Resistance in the early days of the war, in his book *La Guerre Secrète de Josephine Baker*. She turned her whole energy to this cause until the entry into the war of the United States, when she began a series of tours entertaining the troops. For the part she played during this era she was awarded both the Légion d'Honneur and the Croix de la Résistance; in her citation for the latter it is noted that she displayed "un sang- froid remarquable" and her com- rade Captain Pullolle said "the desire of our allies and consequently the Free French was written in part over the pages of *J'ai Deux Amours*".

After the war Josephine made a triumphant come-back, at the Folies Bergère where she launched her famous impersonation of Mary Queen of Scots in prison, singing Schubert's *Ave Maria*. Then she returned to America for a tour which began successfully enough but turned sour as her increasingly outrageous confrontations with restaurant, hotel and theatre own-

ers over Jim Crow race laws led to a smear campaign being launched against her by the right-wing gutter press. Josephine's political and ideological naïveté are apparent in accounts of most of her off-stage dealings - she was too much of a dreamer and a performer to make a success in the political arena of McCarthyite America. Instead she adopted twelve children of different nationalities to show the world that human beings could live in racial harmony. This "rainbow tribe" became her raison d'être for the last twenty-five years of her life.

This will not be the last book about Josephine Baker. She assured her own literary industry by pro-

Pierre MacOrlan; Linné de Pougy is variously Puggy or Pouney and Offenbach is said to have died in 1890.

What would be of further interest is a theatrical biography of Josephine Baker. Once she has passed the years of Josephine's first success, Ms Haney pays no more attention to describing or chronic- ling her performances or the artists with whom she worked. She men- tions, but hardly quotes, Janet Flanner and Colette, both of whom wrote about Josephine's Parisian debut. Anna de Noailles was inspired to write a poem about her; a different book would have found room for this and for the

At that final London appearance in 1974 the high soprano had become a mellow contralto and the songs she sang, with the aid of a hand-mike, were just "standards" of the day to which she brought no particular distinction. The atmosphere changed suddenly though when she started to sing in French the song *Hildegard* wrote for her "Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup" and then one was in the presence of the legend which, at the age of sixty-nine, one really had no right to expect to discover intact. At the end of the perfor- mance when the curtain was raised for the last of many calls, it stop- ped at about three feet from the floor to reveal just Josephine's legs, knees knocking in a vigorous Charleston.

Despite the reservations I have expressed, this is an enjoyable account of Josephine Baker's adventures from rags to riches and back more times than an ordinary mortal could have borne.

It was with a group called the Jones Family Band that Josephine Baker's professional career began at the age of thirteen. Old Man Jones played a big brass horn, his wife played the trumpet and their daughter Doll played the fiddle. Neither Ma Jones nor Doll have found their way into Antoinette Handy's study of female instrumen- tal players in the history of black music in the twentieth century. She has drawn the line where street musicians are concerned but the book collects together details of the careers of over one hundred American bands and orchestras in the last fifty or so years. A few are famous - Lil Armstrong, the second Mrs Louis Armstrong, Wil- lie Litcher, Mary Lou Williams and Lovie Austin, but mostly they are just working musicians who made their careers without becom- ing stars or celebrities. No one need be surprised at the variety of experience and accomplishment that black women have contributed - Handy is herself a virtuoso pianist who has had a wide career on the concert platform in America and Europe. Her book is in six sections, each dealing with a cate- gory of performer - string, key- board, wind and percussion players, orchestra leaders and so on. An intro- duction to each section is then followed by the career biographies of the players selected. There are various charts and photographs to supplement these texts and examples of the forms used and the questions asked.

I could have wished that the two authors, Haney and Handy, had managed to take a leaf out of one another's books. *Naked At the Feast* could do with some of the scholarly research and academic reticence that *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* displays and similarly a little more space between the facts would make the second book easier to read. To give but one example, the entries on Lovie Austin, whose career lasted from 1920 until her death in 1972, give the details of her various incarnations as pianist and band-leader (her group had the somewhat Firkbankian name of Lovie Austin and her Blues Serenaders) but nothing about her vivid personality or her famous leopard-skin upholstered Stutz Bearcat automobile which, accord- ing to Albert Hunter (the author of *Downhearted Blues* who still sings regularly in New York), "She could drive it like she bought an oil-field, she'd go so fast".

As this is the only reference book so far dealing with its sub- ject, it will be of value to anyone interested in the history of Ameri- can music. As a social study the picture available is somewhat frag- mented and the material might be re-presented in a different way to show how the problems affecting these women differed from those in Europe, and how they have changed - presumably for the better.

# The antisemitic apocalypse

By Robert Alter

DAVID I. GOLDSTEIN:  
Dostoevsky and the Jews  
213pp. University of Texas Press.  
\$17.50.  
0 292 71528 5

The title of this scholarly study might at first glance seem an invitation for the raising of eyebrows. Although, as the specialists remind us, Dostoevsky was a prolific journalist, polemicist, diarist, and letter-writer, we read him, after all, for the visionary power and the probing psychological insight of his novels, and in his fiction itself Jews are notable chiefly for their absence. There are occasional passing references, almost always hostile, to "the Yids", but the only actual fictional portrait of a Jew Dostoevsky ever undertook was the vignette in *The House of the Dead* of Isai Fomitich, who is a kind of exotic grotesque mascot for the other convicts, teased by them "as one teases dogs, parrots, or any sort of trained animal", regarded by them, and by the narrator, with a mixture of contem- ptuous amusement and condescending affection.

Apart from poor Isai Fomitich, the sole apparently Jewish figures in any of the novels are Lyamshin, the conspirator who betrays his comrades in *The Possessed* and who would seem to be, as David Goldstein plausibly argues, a convert from Judaism; and the bizarre Jewish fireman in *Crime and Punishment* who makes a walk-on appearance - so brief as to go unnoticed by many readers - in order to witness Svidri- galov's suicide. Mr Goldstein's read- ing of the suicide scene in *Crime and Punishment* is a touchstone, at once fascinating and problematic, of his whole approach to this subject, and I should like to return to it presently.

Despite the remarkable paucity of fictional treatments of Jews by Dos- toevsky, Goldstein's meticulous investigation of every relevant document together with every secondary text on the subject convinces one that he is dealing with a question of considerable importance for the understanding of this tormented, ambiguous genius. Goldstein traces what amounts to an ominous evolution in Dostoevsky's thinking about the Jews. At the begin- ning of his career, he had actually contemplated writing a play called *The Jew Yankel*, and since he probably knew no Jews firsthand until he met one among his fellow prisoners in Siberia, it seems safe to assume that this dramatic effort would have drawn heavily on the Russian nineteenth- century literary tradition of represent- ing the Jew as a comic, grasping, servile, and finally unscrupulous type. Dostoevsky still clearly had that tradi- tion much in mind when he trans- formed his recollections of an actual Jewish convict into the fictional por- trait of Isai Fomitich.

Upon the writer's return to St Petersburg in 1859, he was at first associated with the more moderate voices of the Slavophile movement and was to some extent prepared to argue against the virulent antisemitism of the extremists. By stages, his own perception of the messianic vocation of the Russian nation became more ex- treme and with that shift, his xenopho- bia, including his hostility toward the Jews, grew more lurid. Goldstein suggests that the period of Dostoev- sky's expatriation in Western Europe from 1867 to 1871 was a crucial time of transition in his thinking. Inflamed as he now became with a vision of the degeneracy of the West and Russia's redemptive role in history, he also became obsessed with the Jews as the arch-enemy of the great Christian civilization that could be achieved only through the Russian church and the Russian people. This obsession pursued him till his death in 1881. If he chose - and it is a choice worth pondering - not to deal with the Jews in the great novels he was writing during this decade, his personal correspond- ence from this period buzzes with re- criminations against the vile Yids swarming around him, and his journal- istic work on a number of occasions shows clear and disturbing evidence of the obsession.

To be sure, he also makes statements in some of his articles about the need

to extend compassion to Jews on the grounds of Christian charity, and he could on occasion be respectful and even kindly toward Jewish correspond- ents who wrote to him to protest the antisemitic views he was espousing in his articles. The dominant theme, however, of Dostoevsky's journalistic and private statements in this last decade of his life is apocalyptic, an ugly picture etched in the acid juices of paranoia.

The antisemitic epithet "blood- sucker" is repeatedly invoked with a concrete sense of vampiric depredation; "The Yids will be sucking the people's blood and feeding on their debauchery and abjection" (article in the *Citizen*, May 1873). One begins to see how Dostoevsky could give enough credence to the libel that Jews mur- dered Christian children to see their blood ritually so that when Alyosha is questioned on the validity of this infamous accusation in *The Brothers Karamazov*, that Dostoevskian para- gon of spiritual integrity replies only, "I don't know." One of Dostoevsky's closest friends in these last years was the notorious Pobedonostsev, the Councillor of State who formulated the Russian own version of a Final Solution: "A third will emigrate, a third will be converted, and a third will perish."

Hewing close to the classic modern antisemitic fantasy, Dostoevsky im- agines the international Jewish con- spiracy carrying out its nefarious scheme through the twin branches of capitalism and socialism (in the uncon- scious, of course, logical opposites easily merge), and he expresses re- peated fears that the dread yoke of these sons of darkness is about to fall on all Christendom. Here he is at his paranoid worst, in a Notebook entry for 1880:

The Yid and his bunk are now reigning over everything: over Europe, education, civilization, socialism - especially socialism, for he will use it to uproot Christianity and destroy its civilization. And when nothing but anarchy remains, the Yid will be in command of everything. For while he goes about preaching socialism, he will stick together with his own, and after all the riches of Europe will have been wasted, the Yid's bank will still be there. The antichrist will come and stand above the anarchy.

These are, I hardly need say, painful words to hear on the lips of a great writer - perhaps more than ever now, a generation after Hitler, when the equivalent of such pernicious lan- guage is trumpeted equally by a burgeoning neo-Nazism, from Argen- tina to Southern California, and by an international alliance of so-called Third World revolutionaries, many of them enjoying the prestigious forum of the United Nations. David Goldstein, as he reviews these troubling docu- ments, strives to preserve an equipoise of the not-in-anger-but-in-sorrow sort, yet the cumulative effect of his book is scathing condemnation. He begins by affirming that he has no intention of denigrating Dostoevsky. He clearly possesses the most profound admira- tion for his brilliance as a novelist, and with all the sober marshalling of evi- dence that constitutes this book, one can almost hear the cries of dismay over a literary love that has been cruelly disappointed: how could he, how could so great a writer have compromised himself through such vile words and thoughts?

There is an antipathetic response to that implicit question in the brief foreword by the eminent biographer of Dostoevsky, Joseph Frank. Curiously, what the foreword comes to is a major revision of the book's central argu- ment, though a revision proposed with exquisite tact and genuine respect for the value of Goldstein's painstaking research. Goldstein, having uncovered the full nastiness of Dostoevsky's anti- semitism, is unwilling to trust any of the occasional gestures of tolerance or compassion towards Jews that the writer made, tending to dismiss them as mere tactical manoeuvres dictated either by the rhetorical necessities of a particular essay or by the political constraints of a particular magazine. Professor Frank, on the other hand, suggests that Dostoevsky's ambiva-

lence and his labile temperament need to be kept constantly in mind: "No more on this question than on any other should the restless, tormented, incredibly volatile Dostoevsky, whose greatest characters so often express the very views he most hated and feared, be reduced to any single point of view." Dostoevsky could, Frank goes on to say, be a passionate antisemite and, at least intermittently, feel guilt over his own antisemitism on the basis of Christian principle; and it is unwarranted to conclude that the expressions of remorse are any less authentic than the venomous invective.

A crucial issue here, which Frank points toward without engaging in his reference to Dostoevsky's "greatest characters," is the qualitative difference between the polemicist, diarist, and correspondent, on the one hand, and the novelist, on the other. Why, indeed, did Dostoevsky, whose "polyphonic" genius enabled him to create such convincing socialists, never invent a real Jew in his novels? Given his preoccupation with the Jewish question, one might almost have pre- dicted that his fictional cast of potentially fascinating enemies of the truth would have included at least one Shylock - a Jew seen to be dangerous and abhor- rent but also granted the emotional timbre and projective power of his own voice as a Jew. (I think a valuable clue to this puzzle is provided by Goldstein's comments on the momentary appear- ance of the Jewish fireman in *Crime*

and *Punishment* - perhaps the one juncture in Dostoevsky and the Jews where the author abandons his cau- tions, workday analysis of documents to make a leap of intuition. Frank suspects that Goldstein may have come down too heavily here on rather slender textual evidence, but the point, it seems to me, is that Goldstein's read- ing is not really an interpretation of the episode's "meaning" in the novel but rather a suggestion of how this curious scene might be a symptom of some- thing in Dostoevsky's imagination outside the novel.

In the novel, Svidrigailov, after his night of ghastly dreams and hallucina- tions in a sordid hotel room, sets out at dawn through the empty, fog-shrouded streets of St Petersburg, pistol in pocket, with the intention of killing himself. By a watchtower he encoun- ters a dolorous Jewish fireman wearing a copper "Achilles helmet". When the Jew asks him in a heavy Yiddish accent where he is going, Svidrigailov replies: to foreign parts, to America. Then he draws the revolver and places it against his temple. The fireman, his pupils widening with horror, calls out: "No, not here, this is not *dze* place here!" and Svidrigailov proceeds to pull the trigger.

Now, in point of historical fact, as Goldstein properly observes, it would have been extremely improbable to find a Jewish fireman in St Petersburg in the middle of the nineteenth cen- tury. He concludes that the fireman

must be a final hallucination of Svidri- galov - something which actually would not make much thematic sense in a novel that exhibits a studied consistency in the hallucinations and nightmares assigned to the various characters. In any case, Goldstein's more important conclusion is that the Jewish phantom figure is ultimately Dostoevsky's hallucination - a hallu- cination which, I would suggest, forced its way past his inner censor to make a fleeting and incongruous appearance in the novel. Otherwise, one should put to explain the presence in the book of this bizarre witness whose pronounced ethnic identity at once violates historio- cal verisimilitude and lacks any evident anchorage in the psychology or themat- ic profile of the character who is about to commit suicide. The odd Jewreck detail of the Achilles helmet is con- structed by Goldstein, perhaps with a note of special pleading in his lan- guage, as a token that "in Dostoevsky's imagination the Jew's 'brow remains marked by the stamp of the eternal'." What he goes on to say, however, is both persuasive and suggestive:

His ghostlike presence represents an eerie challenge to the Messianic role of the Russian people that Dostoevsky would like to preempt for them [sic]. Until this phantom could be exorcised for all times and ground into atomospheric dust, Dostoevsky would be assailed by tormenting doubts as to the legiti- macy of the exclusive God-bearing

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## Ancient Geographers

Evening draws in tightly, the light pulled down, tucked in, the strong excitement of cloud and dark coming on with the harmony of autumn, walking carefully amid dangers, the landscapes of ancient geographers.

Penelope Shuttle







## commentary

## Tidy explanations

By Richard Combs

From the Life of the Marionettes  
Academy Cinema 2

About the time of *The Silence of the Lambs*, it seemed that on the subjects of angst, anomic, alienation and general disgust with human life, nobody could cut it like Ingmar Bergman. But the cinema has dabbled a lot in those areas since then, and even an unintelligent, thick-skulled thriller like *The First Deadly Sin* now touches incidentally on such modern evils. It also brandishes the religious symbolism that once seemed a definitely unique part of Bergman's moral baggage. None of which, to be sure, should diminish the interest of Bergman. But in the case of *From the Life of the Marionettes* it does leave him rather high and dry. High in the sense that the analytical, almost clinical context disengages audience comfort: the torments of his characters come tumbling forth, with none of the usual dramatic structuring and tidying. Dry in the sense that this parade of faces and voices, each given its turn at confession and self-examination, seems to have us captive in a consulting room.

There is drama here, of course, a story, characterization and even explanations. The film begins with a murder. Peter Eggermön, a young, successful businessman, has been introduced to a prostitute who happens to have the same name as his wife, Katarina. She appears to be comforting him when he abruptly turns on her, pursues her relentlessly through the claustrophobic warren beneath a strip club and finally does her to death off-screen. The scene is suffused with a lurid glow, turning the location into hell, predictably enough, but also into some kind of basic human foundry (Peter ironically refers to himself at one point as "a pulp of blood and nerves"). What follows, in antiseptically chilling monochrome, is a series of revelations about Peter, his family, friends and associates, all dated in relation to the "catastrophe".

Peter talks to his psychiatrist of his secret sense of horror, rooted in a dream of killing his wife. He also talks to Katarina of the lack of freedom he feels in his life, and of the enigma which he is too emulated to describe to her. She in turn confesses to having been

ambushed by a doubting mind when she least expected it, while her fashion business partner, a homosexual, experiences his own dissolution every time he looks in a mirror. The psychiatrist finally has an explanation for Peter's breakdown. The son of a weak father and a strong-willed theatrical mother, he had been unable to accept or express his secret homosexual inclinations. The society in which he moved offered him no release, only an anesthetizing round of drink, drugs and parties. When he slipped into another milieu, however, that of the prostitute, the release occurred in a lethal explosion.

As we are not led to put too much faith in the moral authority of the psychiatrist (he has been trying to have an affair with Peter's wife), Bergman probably doesn't believe that his professional judgement sums up the film. The trouble is that this cut and dried framework is not even a helpful context for the scenes in which characters grope obscurely after more numinous meanings. Similarly, such machinations of plot as there are – the psychiatrist's amorous moves, the homosexual's confession that he was trying to get Peter away from his wife – are over-nal and perfunctory. They set the stage for the monologues, but Bergman doesn't intend that they should be of interest in themselves.

It is probably not intended, in fact, that anything in *From the Life of the Marionettes* should seem as real as the anguish confided to us face to face by the characters. In all other respects, the film partakes of the symbolical, from the title and the glossy décor (interiors of chrome and "natural" woods that look crisp from the factory, off-screen. The scene is suffused with a lurid glow, turning the location into hell, predictably enough, but also into some kind of basic human foundry (Peter ironically refers to himself at one point as "a pulp of blood and nerves"). What follows, in antiseptically chilling monochrome, is a series of revelations about Peter, his family, friends and associates, all dated in relation to the "catastrophe".

## Far reaches

By Richard Osborne

Vladimir Ashkenazy  
Royal Festival Hall

Ashkenazy's performance of Beethoven's last two piano sonatas in his recital on June 24 was a provoking experience. To have the transfigured climax of Op. 110, the musical equivalent of Goethe's "Upward Fall", so rudely contradicted by the savage diminished harmonies of the start of Op. 111 was a salutary experience.

Op. 110 presents its own special problems, of course. The little Eric Blom once devoted valuable column inches looking for the "second subject" of the sonata's first movement – as vain an undertaking as seeking out the plot of Beethoven's "Eolian Harp". In late Beethoven, as in the Conversation Pianos of Cologne, the movement is the movement of "subject" reflecting mind. To treat of "subject" in music which is preoccupied, above all, with growth, transition and transformation may be musicology but it is hardly good sense.

In this performance, Ashkenazy treated Beethoven's moments of spiritual stasis, the points of rapt tranquility, with characteristically spellbinding withdrawals of tone. It was a generous rendering too. For Ashkenazy, as for Schnabel before him, the word *Andante* implies a quiet-pulsing energy. He continues to misjudge the

Arioso's preceding recitative, playing it too slowly for the ear to travel from note to note; and the Scherzo seemed to lack pace and thrust ("Do not miss the music's fierce, plebeian voice", enjoined the aristocratic Cortot); but these were minor flaws.

Ashkenazy favours a quickening at the second variation, an intimation of joy in a reading which sees the entire movement as poised between serenity and joy. Op. 111 was vividly articulated, superbly "registered" at the keyboard's furthest reaches. The Arietta was played *molto semplice* rather than *molto adagio*, every note a slender pillar of tone on which the structure is later to rest.

After the interval, Chopin, and a whiff of theatre. To challenge the Beethoven at all adequately, the B minor Sonata needed to stand alone. As it was, Ashkenazy prefaced it with the two Op. 27 Nocturnes, the one painted, the other carved in D flat major, exquisitely realized by him. They tended to pre-empt the Sonata's opening pages, to which Ashkenazy gave a somewhat diffused feel: Chopin would surely have played this movement *maestoso*, with a tautened rhythm. One missed too, the Scherzo's fleeting, visionary mood in spite of a genuinely quick tempo. There was, nonetheless, Ashkenazy's, stirring way with the finale's heroic utterances. Here, as in the Beethoven, he warmed to the music's serious purpose and tactile splendour.

## After impressions

By David Alexander

Mezzotints by David Lucas  
Fitzwilliam Museum, CambridgeWallerant Vaillant  
Christopher Mendez Gallery, 51 Lexington St., London W1

In the early 1830s, John Constable began to issue a series of small mezzotint plates of landscape views in an attempt to increase public interest in English rural scenery. These prints (generally less than five by nine inches) managed to convey as few other engravings do the changes of season and weather. Their success was due in part to Constable's use of a young engraver, David Lucas, the centenary of whose death is marked by the current exhibition at the Fitzwilliam (until July 5). But they also owed much to Constable's involvement in their production. The Fitzwilliam exhibition shows many of the progress proofs on which artist and engraver worked, and gives the visitor an idea of the closeness and intensity of their collaboration. The importance of these prints is now appreciated, and they are all reproduced in Andrew Wilton's recently published *Constable's 'English Landscape Scenery'* which puts the prints, so long of interest only to collectors, in their wider art-historical background.

The name of Lucas is so linked to Constable that it is generally forgotten that he had an independent reputation in his day. The exhibition rightly includes examples of his work after other artists: his prints after Edward Price's Norwegian views in particular bring home the fact that Lucas's skill as a landscape engraver did not depend on having Constable at his shoulder. But it seems that the engraver's devotion to the unfashionable Constable career after the latter's death. Long before Lucas died in a Fulham workhouse, he had sunk into obscurity, and we can only guess from his youthful work after Constable what he might have produced had another landscape painter appreciated his gifts.

One reason why Lucas's prints after Constable were not a commercial success is that the public did not expect mezzotints to be used to show cloud and sunshine. It was a technique used to reproduce faces and fabrics. One of the first to exploit the medium was the Lille-born portrait painter Wallerant Vaillant. Vaillant assisted the pioneer of the art, Prince Rupert; he settled in Amsterdam and can be counted the first professional mezzotint engraver. Although he engraved over 200 plates, his prints are not easily found; Christopher Mendez is therefore to be congratulated on having assembled a group of nearly thirty, together with two mezzotints by his brothers and "The Drawing Academy" attributed to Vaillant but of uncertain authorship.

The rarity of Vaillant's prints is one reason why his work is relatively unknown. Because F.W.H. Hollstein's illustrated catalogue *Dutch and Flemish Engravings, Engravings and Woodcuts, c. 1450-1700* is treating engravers in alphabetical order Vaillant's work has yet to be published there, and some



"Two singing youths", a 1675 mezzotint by Vaillant after Frans Hals, from the exhibition reviewed here

of the prints illustrated in Christopher Mendez's catalogue have probably never been reproduced before. These prints, though they vary in quality of impression, make a brilliant effect, and one can understand why the technique, with its subtle differentiation of textures, caught on so quickly in Holland and England. Most of the prints in the exhibition are reproduced, notably after Dutch genre; in fact Vaillant's best prints are after his own paintings, and it is a pity that Mendez cannot show any of the self-portraits and has only a couple of their studies of Vaillant's family and circle, which include some of the masterpieces of child portraiture.

## Lovely names

By T.J. Binyon

For Your Eyes Only  
Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square

It might be tempting to explain the discontinuities of this film by the ineptness of the screenwriters. Since no Ian Fleming novel is unfilled, they have had to patchwork together – unsuccessfully, it might be thought – a number of short stories. But this explanation ignores the evidence of the pre-title sequence – in which an earlier enemy gives Bond a switch-back ride to certain death in a radio-controlled helicopter: an event totally and absolutely unconnected with anything that is to follow.

That is, instead of happily falling prey to discontinuity, the screenwriters have consciously sought it out. Their aim, skilfully achieved, has been to produce a kind of kinetic mosaic: a series of chases and fights arranged in a

purely aleatory order – there is very rarely a logical, narrative reason why one should precede or succeed another.

Each individual chunk of pattern, examined closely, reveals itself as an extended vermouth advertisement. Each is set in tourist land (Spanish villa, Italian ski resorts, Greek island), each involves furious action (car chase, ski run, mountain climb) and ends, after mock or real violence, with a punch-line from 007. At this point the mind's eye involuntarily conjures a glass into his hand and places a bottle, brand name to the fore, by his side. At the same time each scene is undeniably well done, always exciting and often successfully funny.

As before, Roger Moore is a smoothly urbane Bond, Melina Havelock, seeking revenge (she is half-Greek) after her parents have been machine-gunned from a sea-plane by a Cuban hitman, is played by Caroline Bouquet. She wears her hair longer than Bond's other girls; is considerably thinner, and much more coy: "For your eyes only, James," she whispers in her cute Greek accent as, in the final minute, her nightgown rustles down to her ankles – on which the camera, obviously in the hands of a gentleman, firmly keeps its gaze. Others appearing include a sex-mad teenage ice skater (Lynn-Holly Johnson), her sinister coach (Bill Bennett), a good Greek smuggler (Topol), a bad Greek smuggler (Julian Glover) and an Austrian countess from Manchester (Cassandra Harris).

Early in the film we glimpse for a moment a gaggle of beauties, grouped picturesquely round a Spanish swimming pool. Their names deserve to be recorded, not so much for dramatic achievement, as for the way in which they allow the cast list to end in something approaching a poem. They are: Lalla Dean, Evelyn Drogue, Laoura Hadzivasili, Koko, Chai Lee, Kim Mills, Tula, Vanya, Viva, Lizzy Warrille and Alison Worth. One would have liked to see more of them, but even so this is as pointless a way of growing 127 minutes older as one is likely to find.

## Rational grotesque

By Keith Walker

No Country for Old Men  
BBC TV

Swift's last years weren't pretty. His cousin Martha Whiteway wrote, "He walked in the house ten hours a day, his meat was served up ready cut, and sometimes it would lie an hour before he would touch it, and then eat it walking. The torture he was in is not to be described." Just before he died he arrogated St Paul's triumphant "I am what I am" to his own purposes. What was he?

One of the theories lurking behind BBC2's *No Country for Old Men: The Long Exile of Jonathan Swift* (June 28) is that he was a man trying to maintain the dictates of reason in a world seething with vice and folly, and that the strain finally almost broke his mind. Tristram Powell's film, with an allusive and unusually literate script by David Nokes drawn from Swift's writings and from early biographies, doesn't quite say what is probably not true, that Swift went mad, but it toys with the idea. It's a gripping and sometimes persuasive fantasy in the grotesque. Greedy landowners slurp and guzzle at the disembodied bodies of young children. Bizarrely made-up courtiers are seen in distorting mirrors. Big people and little people are evoked by oblique camera shots. Rain, mud, and dogs wandering through kitchens, equal Ireland. So a more or less close-up of a horse shitting, a sight usually seen in family viewing hours only during the Trooping of the Colour, has a reassuring normality about it. Anachronistic Hogarth etchings contribute to the general squalor. The occasional reminiscence of Vermeer (a servant girl holding a dish, a head reflected in a mirror) adds to the remarkable beauty of parts of the film while confusing the general effect.

Garrulous and good-hearted Tom Sheridan, played by Cyril Cusack, narrates and acts in the story (such as it is): the dramatized parts concerning Sheridan and Swift are laboured and mercifully brief. Since Sheridan died some seven years before Swift, this film about Swift's last years can't afford to be too nice about chronology (was Handel ever performed at the court of Queen Anne?). The perspective is from Swift's seventieth birthday, for which, as it happens, Sheridan was available. Swift's fan impressions grumpy Trevor Howard) is seen walk-

ing, talking, eating, sleeping, giving alms, sermonizing, riding, washing (with somewhat less than "oriental scrupulousity") and remembering: remembering his days of preparation at Moor Park where he tutored the young Stella, his years of triumph in London where he wrote to Stella and flirted with Vanessa, and remembering, too, his works, especially *Gulliver*.

As everyone (except some experts on Swift) knows, Gulliver often stands for Swift. Despairing of catching the obliquities and opportunism of *Gulliver's Travels*, Nokes and Powell ride the identification hard. *Gulliver's Travels* assumes the character of a child's nightmare of proportions, lacking the comedy that Swift and Rabelais found in the game of big people and little people and the relatively unfrustrating aspect of the etchings to the 1727 French translation, etchings that Powell elsewhere uses. Once, hilariously, the drawn and emaciated faces of the actors who elsewhere play the starving populace of Dublin (all eighteen of them) figure for a moment the menace of the inhabitants of Brobdingnag. The female yahoos show that Swift was all mucked up about women. If you're going to dramatize *Gulliver's Travels* at all, probably bold simplifications like these are necessary. And you can have Swift wandering about as Gulliver-as-hippophile, or Swift in a bedlam out of *A Tale of a Tub* and Hogarth, peopled with Struldbruggs – it all contributes to the delicious complexity of effect, if not to an understanding of *Gulliver's Travels*.

There's a striking visual (but not verbal) evasion during the dramatization of "The Lady's Dressing Room". Moreover, the capers of the actor bear no relation to the narrator's horrified dawning awareness that "Celia shifts: Stephen merely plays a frantic man who's left his passport in a hotel bedroom. The pastiche sermon (made up from Swift's real sermons, with something added from outside) rings false. But generally this remarkable film paints an unflinching if impressionistic portrait.

Swift haunted Yeats (another member of the protestant Anglo-Irish dominance), and so there is some appropriateness in the title. But Yeats also had something specific in mind, which doesn't seem quite right for the Dean of St Patrick's – one couldn't tell if Swift's "drinking coffee" with Vanessa was held to be a code. Anyway Swift held the view that Ireland was "no place" long before he came to be old.

## Collision course

By Nicholas Shakespeare

London Calling  
Square Thing Studio, Stratford E15

Sharing its title with both a song by The Clash and the World Service's bulletin, London Calling is Tony Marchant's second play at Stratford East's welter-ling Studio Theatre: at twenty-one he is already part of a tradition that goes back to Barrie Keefe's trilogy, *Gimme Shelter*. Having stolen a briefcase and mugged a policeman, two teenagers, Paul and Saff, scramble into a corrugated yard in the midsummer sun. The action is determined by alternating guilt and day-dreams prompted by travel brochures found in the briefcase.

Paul and Saff sit at either end of this see-saw. Jamie Foreman's Paul is a heavyweight performance: his appearance has veered him well in the ways of guilt. Blinking in the light of what he has done, as well as of why he did it, he veers from rambling recollections of a day-trip to Folkestone and time spent closeted with The Clash, to anguished, if sometimes raucous, outbursts against the police and the environment he has helped destroy.

In trying to compensate for the bare

## commentary

## Egotistical ridiculous

By Andrew Motion

John Keats  
BBC TV

The popular image of a poet derives largely from the Romantics. This century, various bank clerks, school-teachers and librarians have tried to establish an alternative, but their shows of ordinariness have tended to be either disregarded or greeted with amused surprise. What is expected and acceptable, it seems, is spectacular torment.

Nick McCarty's two-part television portrait of Keats showed distress in abundance – with good reason: Keats's career was remarkably intense and agonized. But it was also capable, like all lives, of being humdrum too, and by ignoring this McCarty failed to provide much sign of spontaneous and familiar humanity. His Keats ranted and raved in a prolonged melodramatic passion often not far removed from the silliness of the *Radio Times* blurb, which described the poetic impulse as "a power more devastating than a clenched fist, more piercing than a surgeon's knife".

The result was embarrassing, though not in the engaging way that Keats's poems often are. All their bluster and intensity was disrupted, partly by ham delivery and partly by the script's literalism. At one point Keats's fond thoughts of Fanny Brawne were accompanied by a shot in which she seemed to be standing behind net curtains, up to her waist in commode. At others, poems were clumsily reduced to their likely original motivations. Perhaps Cowden Clarke really did welcome Keats one evening saying

## Freerange drama

By Timothy McFarland

Ella  
ICA Theatre

Seven of the nine performers in Herbert Achternbusch's *Ella* are live hens, scratching and pecking away behind the screens of wire-mesh that behind the stage of the ICA Theatre into a chicken-house. Competing for our attention with this scene-stealing sport-poring act and sharing their squalid prison are Ella and her son Josef. Ella sits watching television with headphones on, painting her finger-nails in silence, while Josef, clad in a dress and apron, assumes her identity, acts the role of her mother and struggles with the coffee-grinder at the kitchen table. He also gives us, in a ninety-minute monologue, Ella's reminiscences of a lifetime of utter deprivation and brutal subjection. She has been beaten silly by her father, married off disgracefully, shot up in a series of prisons and mental hospitals, tormented by evil nurses and nuns, packed off to Bad Wiessee by the SS and infected with syphilis by American soldiers.

With the help of a map to support Josef-Ella's flagging memory, all the stages of this life are precisely located in Bavaria. Achternbusch's original text (1973) is written in Bavarian dialect too, or rather in something based on it – an idiom stretched, broken and battered to the point of a protesting but scarcely articulate helplessness, so that Ella is as firmly imprisoned within her language as she is in the psychiatric prison or in the cage-set of the theatre. This use of dialect is to demonstrate the socially conditioned forms of deprivation links Achternbusch with his Bavarian contemporaries Kretz, Sperr and Fassbinder, and with the pre-war socialist dramatist Marieluise Fleißer. Even in the work of the classic Bavarian author Ludwig Thoma, the rural-idyllic element is balanced by a sharpened social awareness inherent in the demotic

Idiom. In the new writers this element has been enlarged into a savage parody of *Hellmüller*, in which peasant folk and farmyard chickens alike have been unnaturally domesticated and put behind wire-netting.

Ella's appalling history is based, it is said, on the experiences of the author's aunt. Achternbusch first published this monologue in one of the collections of short stories, scenarios and diary-entries which he calls his novels. In these and in his films he rages with growing intensity against the dehumanizing social bigotry and brutality which he perceives in his native province. Given this degree of specific linguistic and social reference, one might ask how translatable the work is; but in fact a very considerable distancing effect had already been achieved through the role-switch of mother and son, and the "real" hen-house, both elements introduced by the author for the theatre version in 1978.

In the ICA production, the straightforward English text (by Estella Schmid and Gavin Muir) merely adds one more distancing element. Bill Paterson's Josef breaks through all these barriers in a performance of great energy and conviction, with the help of a Scottish accent which is, he disarmingly assures us, a pretty good equivalent for Bavarian. It is a richly varied, inventive tour-de-force and it entertains us in a rather more friendly manner than can really be intended by Achternbusch's desolate recital. This lightning of the texture of the piece is consistent throughout Tim Albery's production, and it undoubtedly renders the horror and the anger more palatable when they burst through. Ella herself, the mute victim and end-product of the narrative history, is established as a strong presence by Janet Henfrey; perhaps less defeated and crushed than she might be. Nor do the sleek and contented hens do much to support the dire moral of the tale as they cluck happily about the set. They are certainly not the battered victims of a battery-society; they do credit to Islington Free Farm.

## New Oxford Books: Literature

## The Oxford Book of Short Stories

Chosen by V.S. Pritchett

V.S. Pritchett, one of the most distinguished of contemporary short-story writers, has chosen some forty stories written in English from the early nineteenth century to the present day, which to his eye and in their time have been among the most original examples of a changing art. The collection bears witness to the talent of the past, and to the talent that continues to flourish. A sumptuous harvest in one barn, *The Oxford Book of Short Stories* ranges from Scott to Updike with no noticeable omissions and V.S. Pritchett's lucid introduction. *The Guardian*, £9.50

## Anne Thackeray Ritchie

Winifred Gérin

The life of Anne Ritchie (1837-1919) linked the worlds of her father Thackeray and her niece Virginia Woolf. Winifred Gérin's biography throws new light on Thackeray as a family man; her portrait of him belies the hackneyed picture of him as a cynic and a snob. Anne Ritchie herself became a woman of letters, an admired novelist in the 1860s and 1870s, and a superb writer of memoirs. Illustrated £12.50

## The Diary of a Country Parson

James Woodforde  
Edited by John Beresford

James Woodforde's *Diary* has enthralled readers since its first publication: it is a unique document of social history and a classic of personal writing. This is a reprint of John Beresford's comprehensive five-volume edition, first published in the 1920s and out of print since 1973. Illustrated £35

## Hebridean Folk Songs

III. Waulking Songs from Vatersay, Barra, Eriskay, South Uist, and Benbecula  
Edited by J.L. Campbell and Francis Collinson

This is the third and final volume in what the *Glasgow Herald* called "a work of first importance in the collection and preservation of the oral culture of Scottish Gaelic." It contains forty-seven more waulking songs recorded between 1938 and 1965. Often sung to strange archaic airs and intensely evocative of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Highlands and Islands, these songs are one of the most interesting folk survivals of Western Europe. £25.15 July

## John Bunyan: Miscellaneous Works

Volume IX: A Treatise of the Fear of God, The Greatness of the Soul, A Holy Life  
Edited by Richard L. Greaves

£35 Oxford English Texts 16 July

## Oxford University Press



## commentary

### Crime Writers' Conference Jorrock on a publisher's jaunt

By Julian Symons

So who wrote the best short story in the world? Or at least, the story chosen by American, English and Scandinavian judges as the best of the 500-odd stories with a criminal theme submitted to celebrate the third Crime Writers' International Congress in Stockholm? The prizes were handsome: a Sub turbo car – a free holiday plus \$1000 spending money, several prizes of \$500.

All the stories were submitted pseudonymously. The Sub was won by a part-time American writer named Frank Sisk who does much of his work in hotel rooms, the SAS holiday went to the almost equally little-known Dwight Steward, a teacher at Delaware State College. Third prize was won by Tony Hillerman, whose stories with a Navajo investigator have made more in the US than in Britain; and minor prizes were awarded to Michael Gilbert and Francis King among others. Christinna Brand, H. R. F. Keating and I were among the also-rans.

What do crime writers talk about when gathered together? Very much what you might expect, really. Puns, discussed Sherlock Holmes, forgery, fingerprints and how to fake them, the generally dismal plight of the crime short story (gifts from Sub and SAS excepted), and more general matters like how near to realism the crime story does and should get. There were parties every night, succeeded by hard drinking in smoke-filled rooms, discussion of decreasing royalty rates and declining sales. The English delegation was strong – Desmond Bagley, Christinna Brand, Colin Dexter, H. R. F. Keating, Peter Lovesey, Anthony Price, Ruth Rendell and others – the American one rather less representative, although it was dignified by the presence of Fred Dannay, the surviving half of "Ellery Queen". Several writers cried "Recession" and stayed at their typewriters, others no doubt dislike the inevitable maleness of congresses. The Swedes were exuberant and generous hosts.

CWIC 2 was held in London in 1975. CWIC 2 in New York three years later. CWIC 3 was attended by delegates from more countries than the others, and some of them raised important although not easily solvable problems of communication. At one session, crime writers from the Soviet Union, Japan and India assured us of the crime story's popularity in their countries, but how do those who read only English know what they're like? Julian Semjonov from the USSR had had one

police procedural story published here (*Peruka 38*), but what are his other books like? Semjonov, a gentle back-slapper, said that he chose for hero the ordinary man, not caricatures like Hercule Poirot or Lord Peter Wimsey. But who were the villains, were they dissidents, anti-social elements? A roar of laughter, a slap on the back. "A simple question, you may think, but difficult to answer."

Abdul Hameed, a police inspector from Kerala, has written ten crime stories, and was enthusiastic about the co-operative movement that published and distributed them. Since a royalty of 35% goes to the author, the enthusiasm was not surprising, but it was impossible to find out what those stories written in Malayalam are really like. The Japanese crime story, however, obviously demands attention in Britain and the US. Saeiko Matsumoto, a name mentioned by every Japanese in a master of the crime story, sells 400,000 copies of any book he publishes. Unfortunately the only example of his work known here has been rendered into an English so atrocious as to be almost unintelligible. Matsumoto was not at the Congress, but Shizuko Natsuki, herself a prolific writer, told us that the Japanese crime story has moved into "the era of social crime fiction, setting it apart from pure detective stories", although these, too, are still popular. Does a Japanese Highsmith exist? Perhaps. We need some decent translations.

They are needed also for the Swedish crime story. At all three Congresses the Scandinavians have been present in force, and here they made an effort to draw attention to the flowering of the Swedish crime story in recent years, issuing an excellent brief history by Bo Lundin translated into easy, colloquial English. Reading Lundin's pamphlet one can have no doubt that there are good and lively crime writers in Sweden. Sjöwall and Wahlöö, the most celebrated Swedish crime writers, and according to Lundin by a long way the best, were helped by the passionate advocacy of an American publisher's reader.

Yet the hard basic truth is that the writer in a minority language – Swedish, Danish, Dutch – has a need to explain references in a way that may be damaging to the effects at which he aims. This applies especially to the police procedural story, which is most effective when told with Ed McBain's crispness, rather than with every local reference explained. These were among the problems talked about, not least by Swedes themselves, during and after parties.

By Humphrey Carpenter

JAN READ and MAITE MANJON:  
The Great British Breakfast  
128pp. Michael Joseph. £7.50.  
0 7181 2004 3

On a clement morning at about mid-summer, our friend Mr Jorrock was at the Euston station of the Birmingham railway, with the intention of setting out for a little hunting in one of the midland counties, when he should be observing upon the platform that Mr Soupey Jorrock, "Jorrock's" exclaimed that much-travelled person, "Just the very man! Fawcett a good breakfast?"

As it happened, our hero had partaken only very lightly that morning. "Breakfast, Soupey?" he exclaimed. "A werry good notion!"

"Then," exclaimed Soupey, indicating one of the newest species of express-trains, "step aboard! For in this very conveyance, my good friend Mr Michael Joseph the publisher is about to entertain in the most lavish fashion, in celebration of the issuing to the public of a volume entitled *The Great British Breakfast*!"

"Didn't know books was in your line, Soupey, my dear old cove," exclaimed Mr Jorrock.

"This one is," came the sprightly answer, Soupey the meanwhile holding aloft a copy of the said book. "Why, look, here's Chapter Three – entitled 'In Mr Soupey's Country' – and here's the very breakfast you gave that young Yorkshireman friend of yours in your own house: do you recall? ... a magnificent uncut ham, with a great quarter loaf on one side and a huge Bologna sausage on the other; besides these were nine eggs, two pyramids of muffins, and a great deal of toast, a dozen ship-biscuits, and half a pork pie, while a dozen kidneys were spluttering on a spit before the fire, and Betsy held a gridiron covered with mutton chops on the top; altogether there were as much as would have served ten people."

"Tush!" interrupted the good Jorrock, "a mere scanty fork breakfast, as I observed at the time. Come, now, let's abound this train o' yours, for I could eat an elephant."

They took their seats in the portion of the vehicle reserved for the friends of Mr Michael Joseph. Their host was not himself in evidence, but was represented by a charming young lady who, though somewhat disconcerted by the arrival of Messrs Jorrock and Soupey, quickly made them welcome, under the impression that they were the representatives of one of the sporting journals.

"Now, my dear fellow," observed Soupey, eyeing with enthusiasm the profusion of implements and drinking-vessels upon the snowy cloth, "I need scarcely enjoin you to make a good breakfast; but, should you require encouragement, I observe on page 118 of this excellent volume that ... proteins both stimulate the metabolism, and when eaten with carbohydrates and fat, result in a more gradual and much longer-lasting absorption of nutrients by the blood and tissues. The conclusion is that the traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade and milky coffee or tea produces outstanding results, ensuring a high level of efficiency."

"You and I could've told 'em that," remarked Jorrock with a wink. "But 'oo says bacon and eggs is traditional? Why, I know for a fact that the Saxons broke their fast with cold pork, dark bread, and ale."

"While in the Middle Ages," rejoined Soupey, turning to page 16, "the rich ate boiled beef, mutton and pickled herring, washed down with ale and wine."

"That's the stuff!" cried Jorrock, as the whistle blew and the train began its journey northwards from the metro-poll. "But 'oo's to beat a good huntin' breakfast? Why, I recall ..."

"So do I," murmured Mr Soupey, his eyes misting over. "Cold roast pheasant or game pie – roast chicken – turkey – a good Cheddar cheese – plenty of ale ..."

A discreet cough sounded at his elbow. "Are you ready to order, gentlemen?" inquired a red-coated lackey.

"Oh," murmured Jorrock carelessly, "the usual sort o' thing, you know. A devilled bone or two, some omelettes and a Cumberland ham, a dozen Oxford sausages, grilled kidneys, half a dozen muffins, and maybe a little cold goose."

In answer, the waiter spread before our heroes' eyes a document encased in a translucent frame.

"This is the *Age of the Train*," Soupey read out incredulously. "Please order from our Grill Tray: choice of fruit juice or grapefruit segments, followed by bacon, egg and sausage. Poached haddock 23p extra. Dejectedly he turned to his companion. "My dear Jorrock," he exclaimed sorrowfully, "I appear to have misled you. Not even the influence of Mr Michael Joseph has persuaded these d—d railway cooks to exert themselves beyond the ordinary."

"Never mind, my friend," answered Jorrock merrily enough. "Tell the waiter to bring the 'ole lot, fish, bacon, eggs, juice, segments and all, and no doubt we'll make a 'early enough meal of it."

And so they did, causing something of a sensation among their fellow-travellers, most of whom were literary gentlemen accustomed to breakfast upon nothing heartier than black coffee. As the train sped through some of Mr Jorrock's favourite hunting country, the two sportsmen, still shovelling in the eggs, flipped the pages of the book.

"A regular Beeton!" observed Jorrock, his mouth full. "Some of the

best mouth-watering receipts I ever did see. 'Purée of Game in Scallops' – The Earl of Howth's Devilled Kidneys' – 'Ham Toast with Poached Eggs' – 'Werry inviting! Just then the waiter brought them a jar of preserves. "Cooper's Oxford Marmalade?" inquired Jorrock, scanning the label. "Never heard of it, in all my born days as a grocer."

"Of course not," answered Soupey merrily. "Wasn't invented till after your time. See Chapter Seven my dear fellow. All the work of Sarah Jane Cooper, wife of the host at the Angel Inn at Oxford – though I believe she borrowed the recipe from a Scotch woman."

Whether due to the influence of our two heroes, or to the excellent sense of Mr Michael Joseph, cannot be said; but the fact remains that, long before the train reached its destination in the town of Birmingham, the red-coated waiter had so far departed from the usual procedures as to uncork a substantial number of bottles of good claret.

"That's more the line," remarked Soupey, sipping appreciatively. "This tea and coffee idea is only a modern piece of nonsense, after all. Listen to this: 'For hundreds of years, claret, and more particularly ale, were the regular drinks at breakfast.'"

"Ah," rejoined his companion, "but think of the benefits incurred by Jorrock & Co's tea." Whereupon our heroes, always the man of business, commenced to take orders for cases of that excellent beverage from his fellow-travellers, which occupation quickly passed the time until the train drew to a halt in the New Street station of Birmingham. Here, our two friends parted company. Jorrock to wend his way to some unspectacular rural M.F.H., and Soupey to the Midland Hotel, he having discovered that Mr Michael Joseph was about to hold a luncheon there, and being quite certain that his presence was vital to the success of the occasion.

## All change

By Bruce Boucher

All Stations: A Journey through 150 years  
Science Museum, South Kensington

As the title suggests, nostalgia is the leitmotif of this exhibition, from the entrance, designed as a cut-out procession arch, to the concluding sections on demolition and possible uses of stations in the future. In short compass, one witnesses the complete history of the railway from its uncertain birth and full-blooded maturity in the last century, to its demise and resurrection in our own. The main centre of attention is, of course, the Victorian terminus which is celebrated in reproductions of old photographs, watercolours and cartoons. The great halls, looking like stills from D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, the magnificent iron and glass sheds, the station as propaganda, the station in war and the station as a way of life for the thousands of workers and hangers-on who populated it, all of these are brilliantly evoked.

All Stations was first shown at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, and its transposition is less than a complete success. It meanders along one side of the central hall of the Science Museum in a disconnected series of cubicles. Many of the exhibits are rather dog-eared, connections between photographs and captions are not always clear, and some photographs have disappeared. The main section on the development of the station is well done, but too many of the others simply take up ideas only to discard them. Above all, too little space has been given to the problem of alternative uses for redundant buildings and lines. The laconic picture of the exhibits

is complemented by the catalogue (*All Stations: A Journey through 150 years*, 136pp, £4.95, paperback, 0 901805 16 5), which is handsomely illustrated but short on information.

These drawbacks do not outweigh the value of the exhibition, from which one is likely to respect the fine distinction between the Lenin's, the Tseretis, and the Chernovs (p.233). Kornilov emerges from Stankevich's sympathetic memoirs as a typical Tsarist General: authoritarian, vain, vindictive, anti-semitic, and driven by an obtuse ambition right out of *Macbeth*. But whatever Kornilov's intentions, Stankevich makes it clear that the General's supporters sought a "regime which could coerce and only give orders" after dispensing with the democratic enunciations established by the February Revolution (p.217).

I was also bothered by Fitz-Lyon's careless use of historical evidence to make his case. He presents without caveat Savinkov's message to Kornilov authorizing a military coup to pre-empt an anticipated Bolshevik uprising. But an insurrection was very unlikely at this time. The Bolshevik apparatus was still in a shambles as a result of the repression following the "July Days" and the party's popularity, surging after the failure of the Brusilov Offensive, had not yet peaked. More plausibly, Kerensky and Savinkov seized this opportunity to dispose of the Petrograd Soviet as a rival power centre soon to pass democratically under the control of the Bolsheviks. Even more questionable was the author's attempt to make Kornilov's insistence on the presence of "Socialists" in his new government appear as evidence of the General's democratic aspirations. The speciousness of this argument is patent to anybody familiar with the role of Gustav Noske, *der rote Hund*, in post-war Germany's *Freikorps* terror.

## 'Mao'

Sir, – Simon Leys's attack on Ross Terrill and others (March 6) was no doubt savage, but unlike Terrill's response, it had both wit and point and summed up reactions to the work of Terrill and Han Suyin that have long extended far beyond Simon Leys. I have read a good deal of both Leys and Terrill. I know the former and have only heard the latter; after reading Terrill's remarkably obtuse response (Letters, June 5) I am content to leave it so. Less subjectively, I did find, on my recent visit to China, spent among academics, considerable interest in and acquaintance with the books of Simon Leys, great admiration for them, and much amazement that a simple un-Sinological person like myself should know him and live in the same city with him. To claim, as Ross Terrill does, that Leys's love of China is unrequited is, on my experience, simply false. No one in China, however, wanted to discuss the works of Ross Terrill with me. The reason seems to me obvious: Simon Leys cares more about China than any of us and Chinese are not slow to spot it.

EUGENE KAMENKA  
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The Russian Revolution presents us with a choice between a left-wing authoritarianism and a right-wing authoritarianism, and not that between a Bolshevik dictatorship and a thriving democracy. Underlying Fitz-Lyon's apologetics for a military dictatorship is the tacit but fair assumption that any government was preferable to a Bolshevik regime certain to degenerate into Stalinism. But viewed from the perspective of 1971, the odds against the latter eventually seem far greater than those against the possibility of a military dictatorship engendering a peculiarly Russian form of fascism, no less brutal than Stalinism. Only a casual disregard for the very real fascist potential in the *Korotkoshchina* permits one to make a Bonnie Prince out of a slabby and brutal pretender.

PATRICK FLAHERTY,  
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## Horace Walpole's Correspondence

Sir, – No one will deny the authority of Robert Halsband to review the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence (June 12), but it is a pity you did not choose a reviewer who could express the debt we feel on this side of the Atlantic. Forty-two volumes complete the correspondence of a life that lasted from 1717 to 1797, and the eighteenth century is illuminated for us by the meticulous detail which is not to be derided. When we compare those models of English scholarship, the six-volume Evelyn and the six-volume Boswell, both emanating from Oxford, with the vast undertaking of Yale, which with Indexes will amount to forty-eight much larger volumes, we find them totally eclipsed in scale and certainly matched in faultless scholarship. There is no question of the Yale edition being too big or too detailed: the volumes are a delight to handle and to read, with beautiful typography, and Walpole's own light touch is echoed in the annotations. Their astonishing accuracy extends to the vagaries of English titles, even where the eighteenth century differed from current usage, and the use of English spelling throughout the work is but one example of the fine regard for our sensibilities always shown by its creator, the late W. S. Lewis.

This great contribution by an American to the scholarship of English literature and to the study of our history deserved an obvious academic accolade: it is as if that Dr Lewis never knew that moves were being made in this country to confer honours, academic and national, upon him. It is a consolation that he did know something of our admiration for his work, and we may hope that the expert team who have supported him will know how greatly we admire and thank them for their achievement.

WILLIAM CROWDER,  
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## Wang Fan-hsi

Sir, – Dennis Duncan's review (March 27) of Wang Fan-hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary* (which I translated for the Oxford University Press) tells less about the book than about the reviewer. The thread along which he strings his many criticisms is Wang's supposed insincerity. "Environment", not ideals or deep intellectual commitment, turned Wang to Trotskyism, just as disillusionment at being sent out of the official leadership turned Chen Tu-hsiu to Moscow Gold in Shanghai; Wang the family man dismisses "a couple of wives and a child or two" as irrelevant unworthy of mention by a revolutionary, even though ("suspects" Duncan) these wives and children at times helped to keep Wang. What did Wang live on in Macau, Duncan demands to know? And how did he get to America in his old age? (Had Duncan read no further than the cover he would have learnt that Wang is in England, not America; he got there at the invitation of academic admirers after being hounded out of school-teaching in Macau by pro-Communist officials.)

Two considerations kept Wang from putting personal reminiscences in his book. First, to direct attention to innocent relatives and friends in a memoir of this sort would bring great danger to them. Second, Wang had no wish to put his personal joys and sufferings on a par with the struggles and tragedies of the Chinese revolution, which are the proper subject of his book; for Wang, personal details is self-aggrandizement, and as such despicable.

At several points in Wang's career a timely recantation might have ended his persecution and even landed him a job with the Communists. Certainly a handful of his comrades chose this course (dozens more died in the camps and prisons of Stalin, Chiang Kai-shek, the Japanese occupiers and Mao, although you would never know by reading this review). But Wang stayed unwaveringly loyal to the cause he espoused as a young man, even though he has since been exiled penniless, wracked by ill health brought on by years of gaol and torture, left by a one wife while in prison and twice divorced by another at the order of the Communist authorities.

Duncan, having spent his early career suppressing revolutionaries in Malaya and giving advice to the US army in Vietnam, has turned to literary counter-insurgency in this review. A more sensitive reviewer could not fail to recognize Wang's stubborn idealism, which has been the very cause of all his troubles; a more knowledgeable one would welcome Wang's memoirs as an invaluable document of the Chinese revolution from the cultured pen of one of its most loyal soldiers, and one which (practically unique among writings of or about Chinese Communism) can be republished a

quarter of a century after it was written without causing its author the least embarrassment.

GREGOR BENTON,  
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## American English

Sir, – Thinking over Roger Scruton's remarks on American English in the issue of May 22, I have to conclude that – in Mr Scruton's own words – "it is certainly not lack of confidence that has produced them"; nor does it seem to be either breadth of mind, or any particular acquaintance with American speech and writing. The peculiarly toff tone is that of a Chomskian faced with a talking gorilla. As we know, only human beings talk; and among human beings only the British talk properly. But what's this stuff doing in an issue of the TLS that opens with Roy Harris's review? How can you start with a man who loves and cherishes our common tongue, and end up scronching? Oh, I seem to have willfully committed a neologism. I do beg your pardon!

URSULA LE GUIN,  
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## Japanese architects

Sir, – I find it rather hard that Chris Fawcett (Letters, June 20) should accuse me of antagonism towards Japanese architecture, seeing that I was the author (in 1962) of the first book in England on the achievements of modern architecture in Japan, have returned there repeatedly and written widely – and admirably – about it. I have also done my best to draw attention to the work of other Asian architects, both writing about them

and, for example, a few years ago leading a tour of India to see their work. So I am not guilty of what Mr Fawcett rather grandly calls ethnocentrism. He should not impute motives to me which he cannot know about, and when he pronounces what kind of volume I want he is plumb wrong.

All I was doing was commenting on the volume, *Contemporary Architects*, I had in front of me to review, and the proportionate attention given in it to different countries was a natural matter to touch on. I agree with the sentiments that have inspired Mr Fawcett's last paragraph: nevertheless I felt it worth noting that, after America and Britain, which I explained had been given by far the most attention, Japan was the country with the greatest number of entries except Germany. I did not say the number was too great; only that it was disproportionate. Twenty-nine Japanese architects, according to my count, are included in the book, but only eight Swedish, eight Swiss, six Argentinian, four Danish, three Indian and two Portuguese. Ethnocentricity does not come into it.

I. M. RICHARDS,  
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## 'A Staffordshire Murderer'

Sir, – Mysteriously, James Fenton has in his poem "A Staffordshire Murderer" (June 5) turned the Number of the Beast on its head: "Nine hundred and ninety-nine, the Number of the Beast!" (Fenton); "the number of the beast is six hundred and sixty-six" (Revelations 13, 18). "The number represents a man's name"; whom does Fenton have in mind?

JOHN TROY,  
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## Among this week's contributors

DAVID ALEXANDER is a Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford.

ROBERT ALTER's books include a biography of Stendhal, *A Lion for Love*, 1980.

T. J. BINYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

SIMON BLACKBURN's publications include *Reason and Prediction*, 1972.

BRUCE BOUCHER is a lecturer in the History of Art at University College London and a regular contributor to the *Burlington Magazine*.

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN is Professor of English at the University of Sussex and Associate Director of the National Theatre.

MALCOLM BUDD is a lecturer in Philosophy at University College London.

J. M. CAMERON's most recent book is *On the Idea of a University*, 1978.

PETER CARRY is a Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at Trinity College, Oxford.

HUMPHREY CARPENTER's biography of W. H. Auden is reviewed in the TLS this week.

RICHARD COMBS is editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

PETER J. CONRAD teaches English at the South Bank Polytechnic, London.

CLAIRE CROSS's most recent book is *Church and People 1450-1600*, 1976.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM is the editor of *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 1980.

R. H. C. DAVIS is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Birmingham.

MALCOLM DEAS is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford.

JOHN FORRESTER is the author of *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 1980.

NORRIS FRANKLAND is working on a biography of Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught.

ROGER GARFITT's most recent poems are published in *Wall*, to be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

JULIE HANKEY's thirteenth historical edition of *Richard III* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

ROSALIND HILL is at present working on an edition of the Register of Archbishop Melton.

HAROLD HORSON is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

GRAHAM HOUGH's books include *An Essay on Criticism*, 1973.

JAMES KIRKUP's translation of Camilla Lyle's *The Guardian of the Word* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

W. J. F. JENNER's translation of Lu Xun: *Selected Poems* is forthcoming from the Foreign Languages Press, Peking.

OWEN LATTIMORE's books include *From China Looking Outward*, 1964.

JULIUS LEWIN's books include *Politics and Law in South Africa*, 1963.

RICHARD LINDLEY is co-author with Roger Fellows and Graham Macdonald of *What Philosophy Does*, 1978.

GREVILLE LINDOP's biography of De Quincey, *The Opium-Eater*, will be published shortly.

PETER LINERMAN is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge.

TIMOTHY MCFARLAND is a lecturer in German at University College London.

HELEN MCNEIL is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

ANDREW MORTON won the first Arvon Foundation/Observer Poetry Competition earlier this year.

DAVID NOKES wrote the script of *No Country for Old Men*, reviewed in Commentary this week.

PATRICK O'CONNOR is the editor and publisher of *A Tribute to Yvonne Primemps*, 1978.

ROLAND OLIVER is Professor of the History of Africa at the University of London.

RICHARD OSBORNE is a regular contributor to *Gramophone*.

STUART PIGGOTT's books include *Ruins in a Landscape*, 1976, and *Antiquity Depicted*, 1980.

PETER PORTER's books include *After Martial*, 1972, and *English Subtleties*, 1981.

E. C. RILEY is the author of *Cervantes' Theory of the Novel*, 1962.

RICHARD RORTY's most recent book is *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 1980.

WILLIAM SCAMMELL's collection of poems, *Yes and No*, was published in 1979.

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MICHAEL TANNER has contributed to *The Wagner Companion*.

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# Homosexual happy endings . . .

By Peter J. Conradi

RICHARD DIPPLE, 110 Dorset  
Cracks in the Image  
Stories by Gay Men  
140pp. Gay Men's Press. £2.50.  
0 907010 18 X

The success of an anthology, like that of a good party, need not depend on the adequacy of its premises. This anthology of sixteen stories by thirteen gay men reads at times like a gathering staged for the feebly hopeful reason that at least all the guests have one thing in common. The common topic, serious and important as it is, is not always enough to secure the reader's pleasure.

L. M. Forster's one openly homosexual novel, *Maurice*, finished in 1914 and dedicated to "a Happier Year", ended with Maurice and his Mellors friend entering the festive Greenwood world, turning their backs on the dead conventions of the heterosexual majority, abandoning society. Today's homosexual festivity takes place somewhat uneasily within the common social world, but without looking very festive. In Barry Nonweiler's "Reclaimed" Peter and his third-world lover Rawiri are "both outsiders, outsiders almost". That "almost" is revealing, for, though they both often "began to talk about life after the revolution", the identification of being homosexual with being black reads as wistful. In Ian Everton's "Chrysalis" three gay friends metamorphose either voluntarily or involuntarily (it's deliberately left unclear) into creatures from a netherworld "embracing two orders of nature, the insects and the mammals" and on a moonless night take off for the Scottish highlands "far from people, far from what they were not". Their journeys are of the same kind, "You may be obliged to do to be different, and ironizing your fate may be a way of transforming it."

Transformations are played with also in Robert Gluck's "Elements of a Coffee Service" which gives us two endings. In the first the bunch of people in a car yelling faggot smash into a telegraph pole. The second, nicely places the first as consoling and frivolous: the narrator carefully pledges himself in future to eschewing frivolity and to asking questions "more energetic and precise". The two pastoral endings in Nonweiler's "The Door into the Rosegarden" flatter each other. Nick, on the way home from zapping a film which lubriciously exploits gay stereotypes, is as alienated by the empty sexual cohesiveness of the gay world as by the stupid brutishness of the straight. His eyes meet those of a young black man in the first ending, he and his friend are speechlessly "happy simply in the knowledge that one another existed"; in the second they stand and kiss while the escalator bears them heavenwards into the world beyond alienation.

Some stories are content simply to locate classic plot reversals within the new social landscape. "One of the Risks", by David Rees, presents one hazard of promiscuity. In Peter Robins' "Blind Date" Alan goes to meet someone who has answered his ad in a gay lonelyhearts column, and the surprise is proffered as a pure irony, refreshingly unamoritized. In Eric Presland's "Switchboard" the reversal is also accompanied by a due Aristotelian discovery when another Alan finally meets the distressed middle-aged man who has rung the gay switchboard where he works. Other stories, more ambitious, and sometimes less persuasive, try to imagine the gay world from the standpoint of an often self-deceived straight observer, whose bad faith they highlight: a conventional schoolteacher in Peter Robins' "An Inexact Parallel"; a singer in Dumont Howard's "Coda", who discovers that both her audience, like Judy Garland's, and her lover, are predominantly gay; an inarticulate working-class olderster in Eric Presland's "Me and Mr Mandel" who has never understood the nature of his love for a now dead Jewish tailor.

In the best stories here oppression is something you do to yourself, too, (which is how oppression succeeds), and society begins in the heart. In Adam Mars-Jones's cool and precise "Front Day (the pumpkin light)", Jim, with handsome features, stupid green eyes and a "genital brain", attends a Halloween Costume Ball, a celebration of strangeness, in Virginia. His attempted coupling is compared to that of a species of mantis whose female bites off her husband's head during early foreplay, leaving him to administer the conflagration on Automatic Pilot.

She has sound evolutionary reasons for this, but her lover can't hear them. He continues to go through the motions, and here among the higher primates, so does Jim.

Jon Ward's witty "Dear Mrs Ashe" sets off the "pursuit of the perfect senti-

ment" against the pursuit of emotional plenty and good sex on the morrow. Perhaps the short story is by its nature ineluctably to polemic, though it clearly likes lonely pain. It likes also to induct us into an anti-heroic and low view of social possibility, is unkind to human difference, likes to house defeat, favours precipitate and often nasty narrative surprises. Certainly the better stories here often have their protagonists going home alone, or, if in company, experiencing a keener solitude, fed up with society in every sense. Like the nicer guests you never learn quite enough about them: they manage an artful balance between reticence and disclosure and leave you satisfyingly hungry. The worst are prolix, or, like Forster's embarrassing homosexual stories in *The Life to Come*, coyly buttonhole you and enjoy your discomfiture at their timid revelation.

## Changing places

By James Lasdun

DAVID POWNALL:  
Beloved Latitudes  
140pp. Gollancz. £6.95.  
0 573 02968 9

A chameleon adorns the cover of David Pownall's new novel, and forms the emblem dividing each section. The novel itself makes no direct reference to this motif, but its significance emerges as this story of political development in a Central African state reveals both the shifting nature of historical truth, and the ways in which events conspire to impose the same identity upon even the most radically different of rulers.

"There is", says Male Sebusia, the imprisoned ex-president, "a terrible law which makes one government do what the other ones did." Sebusia is typical of the kind of charismatic African leader in whom idealism and evil have become linked to the point where they can no longer be distinguished from each other. His successor Hubert Hiweve, an academic singularly lacking in charisma, could not be less like Sebusia, yet in his efforts to replace Sebusia's atrocities with the sanity of rational government he finds that "terrible law" forcing him to become a dictator, and to eliminate his enemies by the same ruthless agency as his predecessor used. The final transformation of the chameleon is neatly, perhaps too neatly, symbolized at the end of the book when Hiweve appears at Sebusia's execution wearing the tribally that belonged to Sebusia's English succubus and political advisor "Neville the Devil".

By balancing Sebusia's narrative with the account of Hiweve's rise, Pownall establishes a sustained ambivalence that subtly undermines any attempt on the reader's part to determine a "true" version of history. Only this elusive truth can be of service to Hiweve in his efforts to find the secret of Sebusia's former power, and with this in mind he gives Sebusia the task of dictating his memoirs to Neville in prison.

The bare facts of Sebusia's story are these: he attends a mission school where the history of Africa from the end of colonialism is acted out in miniature; the boys form gangs and run riot, later reneging on a tribal basis. The teachers lose control and withdraw, and Sebusia emerges as a natural leader, asserting his authority over his peers and restoring order to the "post-independence" chaos of the school. A similar sequence of events sees him take control of a state "set up as a failed experiment in freedom", and rise to the presidency. He speaks eloquently of his ambitious projects to revitalize his country; but the reliability of his rhetoric is brought into question by the fact of Neville's evident reluctance to record his master's words. And such

clues as he might have been able to offer Hiweve are lost anyway, as it transpires in a final twist that Neville has been writing down, not Sebusia's story, but his own absurd testament to the impossibility of retrieving the truth from the past.

As far as it goes, *Beloved Latitudes* is an intelligent novel, carefully constructed and lucidly written. The three principal characters are portrayed deftly and convincingly – the ineffectual Hiweve desperately seeking the secret of government while dribbles of Germanic run unceremoniously down his cheek; Sebusia retaining spiritual control over a country he has brutalized, even after he has been overthrown and imprisoned; Neville, enigmatic almost to the point of invisibility. Each is the creation of an author with a clear sense of the relation of politics to the individual. The use of the mission school as Sebusia's political proving-ground smacks slightly of contrivance, as does the suggestion that Hiweve seriously expects to find the secret of power in the memoirs of a man he has condemned to death. But such faults as the novel has are more to do with its omissions than with its contents.

The retrospective nature of the story gives much of the action a certain off-stage quality. We hear of violence, intrigue and revolt, but Pownall seldom attempts to present these elements with any immediacy. Salient incidents in Sebusia's career are compressed to the point where they lose all fictional life.

Pownall's defence might be that his interests lie not so much in the events themselves as in the interpretations of their historical significance. But in fiction the strength of such an interpretation must be in direct proportion to the vigour given to the events behind it. If Pownall had focused a little more of his attention on these events he might have turned what is already a sensitive and penetrating parable into a very powerful novel.

## Imaginary life of a domestic servant

Little by little by careful husbanding  
The regulated hours would lead  
To a blowout of cakes and tea

Little by little by withdrawing  
From the tones of the drawingroom  
The gardener became passionate or the chauffeur

As sometimes in a sale one sighs  
A quite seductive useless garment  
To change countries in, to flee.

Elizabeth Smither

# and lesbian dilemmas

By Heather Lawton

JAN CLAUSEN:  
Mother, Sister, Daughter, Lover  
130pp. The Women's Press. £2.50.  
0 7043 3868 8

Is a reviewer today required to suspend critical judgment on being told that Jan Clausen, an American poet and author of this collection of nine stories, is a "lesbian lover editor clerical worker non-biological parent political activist runner writer"? There is certainly a good deal of special pleading on Ms Clausen's part. All the stories are about relationships, whether between female lovers and sisters, or mothers and daughters. A certain one-dimensional quality emerges from the collection, perhaps related to the fact that none of the stories contains any male characters (apart, that is, from one or two shadowy, deserted husbands who appear either to be shooting-up somewhere out East, or getting re-married to sexist ladies who shave their legs and wear make-up). The feminist/lesbian heroines appear to merge into each other from story to story: is it Chris, Martha, Alice or Leah who is chopping up Chinese vegetables and "stir-frying" over the wok? Which one is publishing poems in *Ala* and which one is a maturely attending school "on the welfare"?

In places Jan Clausen attempts to take an ironic view of her world, as for example in "Blood/Milk" about an alternative feminist publication party: "But have you seen the ads for Blood/Milk? 'One woman's painfully honest record of her journey to another kind of love.' 'It's so sick.' Jennifer moaned."

## In the men's room

By Patricia Craig

AMANDA CROSS:  
A Death in the Faculty  
156pp. Gollancz. £5.95.  
0 575 02982 X

Since Dorothy L. Sayers, in 1923, placed her first corpse in one, the bathtub has loomed compellingly in the imaginations of detective novelists. It is easy to see why. There is something peculiarly horrible about the violation of the bathroom, which is, or should be, a fine and private place. When Amanda Cross's latest victim is discovered in a bathtub, however, it is only a preliminary assault. She emerges from that particular deathtrap physically unharmed. Some time later, her body is found in – of all places – a men's room at Harvard University.

Kate Fansler, Amanda Cross's academic detective, is not slow to see

the implication of this setting. The dead woman, Janet Mandelbaum, had been the university's first female Professor – and, as a consequence, the object of prejudices both old-fashioned and new-fangled. Resented by the entire English Department for being there at all, and resented by certain feminists for failing to throw in her lot with the women's movement, Professor Mandelbaum is the target for a fair amount of malice and acrimony. Her rather unattractive manner does not help to make her a popular figure. The "bathtub incident" is engineered by those who wish to do her, or at least her reputation, harm. Her drink is tampered with at a Faculty party, she is lured into a mahogany tub in a ladies' rest room, and comes to find herself – horrors! – in the company of a radical feminist from an all-woman commune. "Who the fuck are you?" this person is demanding. A muted scandal subsequently breaks. The word "lesbian" is murmured. Janet, in desperation, remembers her old acquaintance Kate Fansler – but Kate ("a sort of over-age Nancy Drew", as her husband put it in a previous novel) arrives too late to be of much help to poor Janet, disgraced in the ladies' room and dead in the genitals.

Readers of Amanda Cross's earlier books will know that Kate's own manner is thoroughly agreeable, her observations witty and her erudition lightly displayed. All the qualities are still make her so engaging a heroine that she is back to his fifteen-year-old self contemplating the same scene, then forward to now and after-now, and ends "Let my eyes at the last be blinded. Not by the dark! But by dazzle." By a tactical extension, both in this and in other poems, Nicholson invests the "gutterings and sykes of light" with something of the potency of Arnold's sea of faith, and further with intimations of mortality and approaching death. It is more convincing than the directly Christian abstractions of a poem such as "The Dumb Spirit"; this collected Norman Nicholson's last collection *A Local Habitation*.

# In a beloved place

By William Scammell

NORMAN NICHOLSON:  
Sea to the West  
64pp. Faber. £5.95.  
0 571 11745 7

Not long ago, in an *Observer* review of poets living in the north-east, Peter Porter detected "a new tilt to regionalism in British poetry" which "amounts to a sort of resentment, a sour delinquency of honesty". Shortly before that, in a *Sunday Times* profile of Martin Amis, Ian Hamilton contemptuously dismissed all doubters of that writer's current status as "losers" and "weits" given to fantasies about "nepotism" and "metropolitan string-pulling". And some little time before that Clive James (author of *The Metropolitan Critic* and various unreliable couplets) was to be heard defending *The New Review* against "talentless regional poets who run in and out of Peak District pubs with carrots stuck up their noses in order to raise the consciousness of the indigenous fauna".

All good fun, of course, but worryingly provincial in outlook. Who and where are the metropolitan poets with whom "regional poets" presumably contrast? Bunting, Larkin, R.S. Thomas, Graham, Wright, Garloch, Hughes, Mackay Brown, Tomlinson, Hill, Fisher, Kinsella, Heaney, Mahoney, Harrison, Dunn? – not a cockney vowel or Johnianism overview among them. As for the poets one associates with London, such as Porter himself, they are either driven back to their roots or else invent a landscape to inhabit, one usually named Art and lacking several vital amenities. Since the Romantics, indeed, the term "regional poet" has become a near-synonym for the rude mechanician taken over the commanding heights of the poetic economy, thus reducing the Oxbridge/London axis to a thin blue line of managerial huffery.

Not that Norman Nicholson's quietly excellent new book seems, at first sight, to lend much support to such revisionism. Nicholson is a regional poet *par excellence*, it might be said; and he says as much himself in his epigraph from late Auden: "A poet's hope: to be, like some valley cheese, local, but prized elsewhere" ("Epistle to a Godson"). This is dauntingly humble: no affluence please, we're British. It also attitudinizes, surely, as patently as the rhetoric it seeks to discredit. William Barnes's poems, for example, will not be improved, or disimproved, or extenuated, and nor will Double Gloucester, by confining them to Wessex, or by explaining that the locals like them. In brief, the disclaimer sells poetry, all poetry, woefully short.

The sea of *Sea to the West* is literally that part of the Irish Sea which washes up against the author's native Milford on the coast of Cumberland. In the meditative title poem he confronts its appearances:

When the sea's to the West  
The evenings are one dazzle –  
You can find no sign of water.  
Sun upflows the horizon;  
Waves of shining  
Heave, crest, fracture,  
Explode on the shore;  
The wide day burns  
In the incandescent mantle of the air.

One registers the shock of "upflows", and the unshowy brilliance of the concluding image, with the homely yet transcendent connotations of "mantle", as typical of this poet's vision. In the next stanzas he takes us back to his fifteen-year-old self contemplating the same scene, then forward to now and after-now, and ends "Let my eyes at the last be blinded. Not by the dark! But by dazzle." By a tactical extension, both in this and in other poems, Nicholson invests the "gutterings and sykes of light" with something of the potency of Arnold's sea of faith, and further with intimations of mortality and approaching death. It is more convincing than the directly Christian abstractions of a poem such as "The Dumb Spirit"; this collected Norman Nicholson's last collection *A Local Habitation*.

Elsewhere, confronting a map of England as a schoolboy, he speaks of "a blurred and hatched diagram of dialects and geology" ("At the Music Festival"), which summarizes many of his familiar concerns. There are new poems about the simplest constituents of landscape, becks, hills, mountains, vents, shingle, clouds, dunes, plankton, ponds, tools, and the corresponding social and linguistic minutiae of a decaying, depopulated early-industrial hinterland are likewise celebrated, or mourned, in a vocabulary as flimsily economical as a drystone wall.

Some pieces are re-workings of subjects better treated in earlier collections. "Haytiding", for instance, employs a favourite device, the paradox embedded in a colloquial phrase ("It's late so soon," he said), more effectively used in "Old Man at a Cricket Match" ("It's mending worse," he said). "On the Dismantling of Millum Ironworks" reuses Wordsworth's famous gaffe about the river Duddon – "remote from every taint of sordid industry" – reminding us of Nicholson's fine early poem "To the River Duddon", which sees further into Wordsworth than many a book-length commentary. Norman Nicholson's sadness about the passing away of the town works is understandable ("The town shrinks and dwindles / Old people's bungalows creek half-way up the hill . . . An age is pensioned off"), but the poem is suffused with a not-altogether-appropriate nostalgia, as though "A hundred years of the Bessemer process" were somehow intrinsically noble, rather than the mixed blessing it probably was.

"Cloud on Black Combe", one of three poems about the mountain which looms close to Milford, is a fine example of Nicholson's ability to make something new and persuasive out of what might seem old-fashioned Ruskinian particulars – though I regret the loss of a fine image between the poem's first appearance in a *Cellar Press Pamphlet* (1975) and its reprinting here. "Black Combe holds tight / To its judge's wig of cloud" becomes simply " . . . to its tuft of cloud", perhaps because a later image likens the fell-top to a "pale, pale, hating" and the bright "Tufted and bracken brine" and the poet thought judges shouldn't modulate into rams, though the colloquialism strikes me as a happy one. The poem is written, like many others in this collection, in free verse, with an irregular but effective use of half and full rhyme. As with "Shingle", whose packed short lines scrutinize the quotidian mysteries of the sea-shore, one wonders if the influence of writers like Hughes and Ted Walker is visible here, and then remembers that this poet was uncouthly "into nature" long before the gathering of "the Tribe of Ted".

Free verse enables Nicholson to make plenty of plain statements – "Some people are flower lovers / I'm a weed lover"; "I laughed once at those words"; "If the town won't talk / Must put words in its mouth" – and to continue his tacit mining of the autobiographical material so memorably opened up in *A Local Habitation*. Images of light and darkness dominate the book, underlining the poet's dual allegiance to the world before his eyes and the one immanent in the rocks and streams of a beloved place. "I / Lean on my wordy counter" he says in "The Safe Side", alluding to the drapery shop run by his father in the house his son still lives in. "Expounding that much, this much . . ." It is our luck that the goods are of such fine quality. Why, you could wear them down to London.

Carcanet have recently published *Thomas Gray: Selected Poems*, edited by John Heath-Stubbs (86pp. £2.50. 85635 317 5). The edition includes notes and a critical commentary, as well as the introduction in which Mr Heath-Stubbs makes claims for Gray as "the most considerable poet of the mid-eighteenth century". Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" also appears in *The Batsford Book of Religious Verse*, edited by Elizabeth Jennings (92pp. £5.95. 0 7134 3889 4), an anthology which mingles Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Southey, Vaughan and Milton with Robert Lowell, W.H. Auden, John Betjeman and Charles Causley.



"Samson", by Salvatore Rosa; a drawing in black chalk, pen and brown ink to be included in a sale of Important Old Master Drawings at Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1, on Tuesday July 7; the second day's sale is on Thursday July 9.

# Resources of recollection

By Grevel Lindop

JAMES FENTON:  
A German Requiem  
9pp. Salamander Press, 73 Morning-side Park, Edinburgh EH10. £1.50.

James Fenton once described a visit to Auden, during the poet's last, somewhat gloomy, months at Oxford. Auden "seemed to have read everything, to have done everything, to have written in every poetic form excepting those (like the triquetra) which he thought rather silly". He confessed to a desire for some new literary influence from which to "bounce off". Fenton suggested Clough. "Clough? No, I've been through Clough", replied Auden. "I was thinking of the Beatles".

Like Auden, Fenton is a poet who has often needed someone to "bounce off", and the inner significance of that anecdote (which Fenton recorded in a *New Statesman* article) is that then and for several years afterwards he was himself following Auden. The marks are clearly visible in *Terminal Moraine*, the collection of poems which appeared in 1972; there is a fascination with unusual and demanding poetic forms, occasionally applied to a clinical, cynical use of the ballad:

Now is the boiler out. The cellar  
Fumes into the hall  
Above, the comet scintillar  
Cuts and the stars fall.  
Let us reconstitute your love.  
The best dry cleaning wind  
Will purge the gray from your cloth  
And leave a glow behind.

Passages of sharp, witty observation are linked to self-portraiture so brittle and constrained that the whole suggests terror and obsession:

There are boys with guns  
And hikers in bright socks. I do not rise  
early.  
I eat in an orderly fashion and think  
clearly.  
I arrange objects in rooms according to a  
design  
And am usually presentable. If the  
prospect is fine

For a walk, I naturally go.  
And there is a tendency to loot the  
dictionary or the science periodicals for  
strange treasures. Celebrating the in-  
tensity of a limited vision in "South  
Parks Road" he announces, "I deal in  
miniature, / Not with the fungus growing  
on the low walls but in / Globose vesicu-  
late hyaline conidia". A reference to  
"the context of the basidiocarp" is  
glossed in "Notes", which turns out to  
be a poem in itself, carefully sliced  
from an article in *Mycologia*. Similarly  
"A Frog" is freed from the technical  
undergrowth of "What the frog's eye  
undergrowth of" in *Proceedings of the  
Institute of Radio Engineers*, 1940.  
(Wasn't it Auden who told someone  
compiling a Christmas "Books of the  
Year" survey that the best thing he'd

read that year was an article on slumps in *Scientific American*?) One can't help wondering what Fenton was looking for as he browsed in *Proc. Inst. Radio Eng.* and came upon the frog. But – such details aside – *Terminal Moraine* does give an impression of Fenton watching for poems to happen in the verbal forests and rubbish-tips around him, pouncing at the right moment and lifting them out, intact and wriggling, for our enjoyment.

Not all the "found poems" in *Terminal Moraine* were verbal. "The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford" in great part simply catalogues a selection of the objects to be found therein:

A musical whip  
From the Torres Straits.  
Mirzapur a sistrum  
Called Junko, "used by aboriginal  
tribes to attract small game."  
Oxark night, a mule violin.  
Whistling arrows, conic cigarettes  
And a mask of Suagga, the Devil Doctor.  
The cyclids worked by strings.

With a subject like the Pitt-Rivers it would be hard to fail entirely. But the title indicates a different handicap, voluntarily undertaken: that of provincialism. Most of the poems seem distinctly academic; more, they seem distinctly Oxford. The "long stream of blocks" mentioned in the epigraph's description of a glacial moraine suggests, among other things, the architectural musings one encounters in a walk through North Oxford: not only the Museums but (in "South Parks Road") St Frideswide's and the School of Inorganic Chemistry, and in "Poésie de Département" the Pharmacology Department.

Fenton's work since *Terminal Moraine* has consisted of some excellent journalism – one recalls his dispatches from Vietnam and Cambodia in the early 1970s, as well as numerous ideological attacks on the grosser ideologies of municipal, judicial and political authority in Britain – and a series of finely-polished poems appearing one by one, at long intervals, in the literary weeklies. His preference for what might be called the long short poem – fifty lines or so – makes each one seem very much a self-contained production. *A German Requiem*, beautifully hand-printed by Charlie Boxer and Tom Fenton, is the latest and, I think, the best. In nine stanzas, and to a pace, it explores reactions to death – individual and collective – and the lies that move in to bury the dead and cover up the past. The poem's ordering principle seems basically cinematic, a series of close-ups linked by dissolve and montage.

We begin with the problem itself, defined in the rhythms of a ritual chant:

It is not what they built. It is what they  
knocked down.  
It is not the houses. It is the spaces  
between the houses  
It is not your memories which haunt you.  
It is not what you have written down.  
It is what you have forgotten, what you  
must forget.  
And with any luck oblivion should  
discover a ritual.

There is then a close-up of a woman taking a bus to the cemetery. "The city of your ancestors / Which stands on the hill opposite, with gleaming palimpsests / As vivid as this charming square, your home". But even as the necropolis seems about to become a comfortable, *hügelreich* landscape, the nightmare surges up:

But when so many had died, so many and  
There were no cities waiting for the  
victims.  
They unscrewed the name-plates from  
the shattered doorways  
And carried them away with the  
coffins.

The squares and parks are overprend with  
"the sequence of young  
cemetaries", the countless dead label-  
led with their brass and enamel door-  
plaques, so that, for example,

Your uncle's grave informed you that he  
lived on the third floor, left.  
You were asked please to ring, and he  
would come down in the lift  
To which one needed a key . . .

We dissolve, next, to the fantasies that spell away guilt: "it seems there is no limit to the resourcefulness of recollection. You see this cupboard? A priest-hole! / And in that lumber-room whole generations have been housed and fed." And we withdraw, finally, to the ritual repetitions from which we begin. "Even the enquirer is charmed / He forgets to pursue the point. / It is not what he wants to know. / It is what he wants not to know".

*A German Requiem* is a poem of considerable rhetorical and imagistic power, exploring a central contemporary problem: how do we, and how should we, live with the memory (or non-memory) of the organized mass-murder in which so many "civilized" societies have engaged at one time or another in the present century? Yet it avoids losing the personal dimension in the historical or limiting itself to a particular time and place. It also shows Fenton freed from the Auden influence and not too obviously "bouncing off" any other poet. There are traces of Eliot and, I suspect, of Enzensberger, and one passage unexpectedly recalls the Plath of the "Bee" poems; but no damage is done.

More important still, the poem seems heartfelt. Too much of Fenton's earlier work had about it a chilly, reserved quality quite different from the warmth and engagement of his journalism. Even his poem about Vietnam, "In Notebook", which appeared in 1976, seemed curiously with the line "And I'm afraid most of my friends are dead", one had to believe that there was real anguish somewhere in the background, but the poem didn't in any way convey it. If *A German Requiem* signals a new phase, where technique will function to embody and share feeling rather than evade it, James Fenton could emerge as a fine and important poet.



# The natural and the formal

By Simon Blackburn

JAMES D. McCRAWLEY:

Everything that linguists have always wanted to know about logic but were ashamed to ask. 508pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15. 0 631 126147

James D. McCrawley's amusing title involves him in a definite risk. For the genre to which it alludes is, I imagine, apt to be disappointing. One can give a detailed description of what those engaged upon some activity do, of the positions that can be taken up, even of the penetration achieved in various areas, without transmitting a clear sense of why the activity matters so much, nor of how much we are missing if we do not join in. In the one case this further sense is gained through practice. In the case of logic it needs a clear perception of the nature of logical analyses and their relation to other kinds of investigation of language. McCrawley's sophisticated, massive,

and conspicuously well-informed introduction to logic certainly provides many of the materials for assessing the relationship between logic and semantics on the one hand, and the language we actually speak on the other.

In his preface McCrawley relates how he was prompted to write the book by exasperation at teaching from even the best logic text-books. It is a curious fact that most logicians, philosophers, and allied workers find most introductory logic texts exasperating, and many of us are prompted to try to write our own. The reason is that if a book evades discussion of the fundamental notions involved in presenting logic — sentence, proposition, truth, possibility, reference, predication and so on — it attracts censure on that score; if on the other hand it develops discussion of such notions it enters treacherous waters with few agreed charts. McCrawley's approach is not to produce a profound philosophical treatment of the basic concepts, but to present as much as possible of the work which logicians have done, and which has bearing on

the semantics of sentences in natural languages. The philosophical issues emerge in individual discussions of the adequacy of formal accounts of sentences of natural language.

The book covers much more than most introductory texts. McCrawley presents not only classical propositional and predicate calculus, but also modal logic, many-valued and prepositional logics, fuzzy logic, and useful discussions of possible world semantics, Montague grammar, the  $\lambda$ -calculus,  $\mu$ us terms, intensional contexts, and other topics of potential interest to the linguist. Not are the different areas merely surveyed; McCrawley thoroughly engages with the positions he sets out, and throughout brings to bear a wide range of pertinent linguistic phenomena. Indeed, apart from its impressive coverage, the main strength of the work lies in the way it deploys a linguist's sensitivity to the surface of language in order to assess the adequacy of familiar formal treatments. McCrawley is well aware of the way in which the considerations made famous by H. P. Grice help to defend the correspond-

dence between the elements of natural language, with all their surface complexities, and the apparently simple elements of formal languages. Nevertheless he frequently finds that the correspondence is inexact.

Perhaps partly because the coverage is so large, it is not always easy to grasp the overall shape of McCrawley's own views. The same subjects, such as definite descriptions, or pronouns, or restricted quantification, are raised in a number of different places, and it is left to the reader to assemble any overall theory for himself. Pronouns, for instance, afford an excellent example of devices where acquaintance with the relevant surface structures is essential to constructing logical theory, but equally where knowledge of logical theory is essential to any syntactical treatment. One would therefore expect McCrawley's blend of abilities to produce particular insights in such an area, and it is a little disappointing that the right traces, they are not only scattered, but rather overshadowed by their neighbours. Thus pronouns are rightly introduced as devices which identify the propositional function determining the logical form given to a sentence, or in other words as the bound variables of quantification theory. But subsequently McCrawley brings out clearly why in the Bach-Peters sentence "the pilot that shot at it hit the MIG that chased him" the pronoun "it" serves not as a bound variable, but as a pronoun of laziness, going proxy for a repetition of the description of the MIG.

Finally he endorses the idea of Lauri Karttunen, beautifully developed by the late Gareth Evans, that sometimes pronouns simply serve as devices referring to items located by some previous chunk of context or discourse. The simplest example illustrating why this idea is needed is something like "three people attended the lecture, and they learned a lot" which does not mean what it would come out naturally as meaning on the bound variable view: "three people are such that they attended the lecture and they learned a lot." The fact that even quantifiers can serve to locate objects of subsequent reference is surprising enough to deserve a good deal of attention, yet McCrawley mentions it only to pass on to some quite different themes connected with speakers' intentions.

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## Subject to subject

By Richard Lindley

E. M. BERENSON: *Understanding Persons: Personal and Impersonal Relationships*. 1980p. Harvester, £18.95. 0 85527 463 8

Objectivity requires people to assume a detachment from their own locations in the world, and to eliminate perceptual and emotional bias from their judgments. Thus an objective ethic would be one which prohibited people from giving any direct weight to their own personal commitments and relationships; for considered objectively, each person counts for one and not more than one.

There is a widely held opinion, especially popular in the scientific community, according to which all reality is objective, that is to say, any alleged item of knowledge or understanding which is inaccessible to the objective point of view, is illusory. F.M. Berenson challenges this opinion by claiming that there is an irreducibly subjective element within genuine personal understanding. The central theme of this book

concerns the role of subjectivity in the understanding of self and others.

There are three levels of personal understanding. What is required for the first is simply the capacity to distinguish persons from non-persons. The second requires the ability to distinguish between different kinds of people, to "have a concept of what it is for someone to be a person of a particular kind". There is no reason why such knowledge and understanding should not be accessible to someone adopting an objective point of view. The final level of understanding, what Berenson calls "understanding on a deep level" requires the knowing subject to realize what it is like to be the person in question, to have an appreciation of how things feel from just that particular point of view. It is possible to gain this kind of understanding only through involvement in reciprocal personal relationships, which in their nature exclude the attitude of detachment which is required by objectivity.

The personal understanding in which Berenson is interested is real; for there is the possibility of mistakenly seeming to understand at this "deep level" either oneself or another person. "Deep" under-

standing may even be objective in the sense of being in principle communicable to others. It is analogous to understanding a novel, a piece of music, or a joke.

It is not denied that there is a role for detached scientific psychology in the understanding of persons. We are just warned against assuming that scientific psychology and sociology can tell us all we ought to want to know about people. Someone whose understanding of people was limited to truths of the social sciences would be a sadly deficient human being. Such a person might be well advised to read *Understanding Persons*, although, if Dr Berenson is correct, perhaps a visit to a psychotherapist would be more appropriate.

As with a number of interesting works in philosophical psychology the conclusions reached are more appealing than the reasons offered for their favour. Berenson employs three styles of argument in the manner of Merleau-Ponty, language conceptual analysis, and analogical reasoning from literary examples. She is to be commended for this variety, even though there is some cost for the cogency of each individual argument.

## Adventure and after

By E. C. Riley

MELVEENA MCKENDRICK: *Cervantes*. 310pp. Hutchinson. £6.95. 0 316 56045 5

Loosely speaking, you could say that the first half of Cervantes' life was dedicated to living a novel and the second half to writing one. Except that neither a life nor a great novel is ever that simple. However, the stark division between the almost incredibly adventurous years of soldiering and slavery and the dreary grind that filled most of the later years poses something of a problem for the biographer. This problem is made more difficult, if anything, by the documentation published by Luis Astrana Marín, who brought out the last volume of his gargantuan biography in 1958. Few of the facts and figures in the deeds, depositions, financial statements, accounts and other documents, relating either to Cervantes' family life or to his jobs as commissary and tax collector, make unthrilling reading. We still possess hardly any information of the kind we should most like to have, derived from autobiographical letters and the personal testimony of contemporaries. So while it may be true, as J. H. Plumb remarks in his foreword to Melveena McKendrick's book, that we know much more about Cervantes' life than we do about Shakespeare's, our intimate view of the author of *Don Quixote* is by no means correspondingly more complete. Dr McKendrick has followed in the exemplary footsteps of Fitzmaurice-Kelly and not tried to

touch up the picture by using material from the fictional works.

Remarkably, her biography is the second in English to appear in two years and the third in a decade. Its immediate predecessor, William Byron's account, is very different, being twice as long and highly imaginative, though compulsively readable. I think it would be possible to give any biography of Cervantes, whether scholarly-reliable or colourful-readable, a little added depth by a more judicious use of the pages in his printed works where he is manifestly expressing his personal views. I mean the prologues and dedications and portions of the *Viaje del Parnaso*. Apart from such factual information as they contain, with careful dissection they would yield some insights into states of mind. Limited as such insights would be, they could be more useful in a biography than the usual short forays into literary criticism, although Dr McKendrick is considerably more dependable than most where this is concerned, it perhaps a bit over-concerned about Cervantes' humour, his literary theories and what not.

Known facts and uncertainties are handled in a measured and sensible way, and from time to time useful second thoughts are prompted about things often taken for granted. For instance, we are reminded that the reference to Cervantes as "beloved pupil" by López de Hoyos, the Erasmus principal of the academic institution Cervantes is assumed to have attended in Madrid, is not very clear. He certainly cannot have studied there for long, even as a very mature student. Again, the tantalizing evidence for and against his being the Miguel de Cervantes

who was sentenced for fighting and wounding one Antonio de Signa in Madrid in September 1569 is carefully weighed, and the verdict given as "not proven". Conditions of life in the banyo of Alhambra were not so bad as we are disposed to think (whatever the publisher's blurb on the wrapper may suggest). Why did the untricked Dominican, Juan Blanco de Paz, fellow-captive of Cervantes in Algiers, hate him so much? There is no knowing. It is useful to be reminded that the positions of commissary and tax-gatherer were not to be sneezed at by anyone in need of a job. On paper at least, they offered an income and status, not to mention all kinds of pickings for persons less scrupulous than Cervantes. The documents (assuming Astrana Marín did not get things very wrong) do one thing at least: Cervantes comes out indisputably well from these difficult years in his unenviable tasks. It is hard to ascribe the spell of unexplained prosperity in 1589 to anything particularly discreditable. Dr McKendrick accepts it as almost certain that he died on the 22nd, not the 23rd of April, as is traditionally supposed on the basis of the burial certificate. However, she does not mention, as Byron does, that Astrana Marín inconsistently accepts the dates of burial certificates as true death dates where others are concerned.

The assertion that "nothing in [Cervantes'] life bears out the distinctive personal promise of the *Lepanto* and the *Algarve* years makes one stop and think a little. What opportunity did he have later on for practising leadership and displaying heroism? No doubt, as the author suggests, he could "compensate for the drab reality of his

existence" in the romances and some of the romantic novelle and plays. But *Don Quixote* is different. It springs from conscious reflection on the idea of high adventure trapped in an existence of drab reality. The cool act of self-detachment that was needed to create an original work out of that seems to me worth any amount of heroics.

The total absence of source references is difficult to understand. Presumably this is policy for the series to which the work belongs, the Library of World Biography. It is nonetheless regrettable that the

landscape, the search for signs in anomalous events or coincidences... Or is it", he asks, "that these things still happen, and nobody, no devout and curious monarch, wants to know?"

Dr Christian is faithful to his own injunction to refrain from imposing modern categories upon his material and from testing it against modern ideas. Once only—in his account of the events at Almonacid de Zorita in 1566 where, because no one had been hurt when the church door fell off its hinges on St Blaise's day, it was decided to consecrate that day to the saint—does he allow himself a very comment regarding the powers of inference displayed. Yet, while wishing that it was a longer book, it must also be said that *Local Religion* is really a hefty article which has been bulked out with a profusion of tables, thirty-two in all, many of them relating information which might have been better expressed in prose. As well as tending to obliterate the author's own warnings regarding the valuelessness of his evidence for statistical purposes, they also occupy much space. So too do the lengthy extracts from the *Relaciones* which too often add little to the author's summary of their content. Since his sources are all in print some economy might have been attempted here, if only in order to make room for rather more analysis.

This is particularly required in connection with Christian's confrontation of "local religion" and the "official Church" to whose agents, he insists, the former was impervious. Yet it was by reference to the calendar of the official Church that communities were able to discover which saint they needed to placate, and it was to the local clergy that the Virgin instructed those to whom she appeared to present themselves. Of course, allowance must be made for clerical authorship of accounts of such visions, and some subtlety is needed to separate the strands. Christian's antithesis, however, is too stark, and his conclusion in Chapter Five seems to contradict his argument. Modern scholarship on the role of the laity in the late-medieval

Church, and notably its sacramental aspect, could be used to supplement the memories of Christian's octogenarians. Reference to just one of John Bossy's articles and a general invocation of *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is hardly enough.

Nor have Spanish historians exhibited quite so little interest in "local religion" as the author suggests. In company with other historians, he insists on that terminology and questions the idea of *popular religion* since "all the evidence indicates that the kind of local religion described was shared by most of the people of Madrid and Toledo... and was as characteristic of the royal family as it was of unlettered peasants." Where is this evidence? Christian's own pages on Toledo point in the other direction and seem fully to justify making a distinction between "peasant cities" and "urbanlike villages", however we describe the religious activity to be encountered there. References to "Franciscan monasticism" and the attribution to Clement VI of an indulgence "dated era of 1353" suggest a rather hazy acquaintance with earlier peninsular history, but there some of the origins of the "stubborn, combative laity" might be found. Allowance must be made for the relics brought to Spain from Byzantium after 1204. Spain south of the Tagus did not have to be restless for want of supplies, as Christian supposes. But if it was so, then why was it? Certainly not for lack of Spaniards at Rome, who were far from being newcomers there in the sixteenth century. Such reservations aside, however, this suggestive study opens some new perspectives to scholars working on either side of that discredited divide, 1492, the year in which the oldest of Dr Christian's revealing informants were born.

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## Civilizing influences

By Percy M. Young

DAVID C. PRICE:

Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance  
250pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£22.50.  
0 521 22806 9

"How, we ask, as we slither over the pages, can we ever hope to come to grips with the Elizabethans?" So once mused Virginia Woolf. Moving from letters to music – or, more pertinently in the present context, to music and letters – a sense of disbelief heightens. The idea that Ministers of the Crown, for instance, were not only musically literate, but also of the opinion that a proper education required the employment of peripatetic instrumental teachers, is so far from today's policies and practices that one must hope that David C. Price's book will find its way into governing hands.

To the Elizabethans and Jacobean, music was a sort of clarity that helped to make life worth living; it even made death worth dying. In his *Act of Divine Mediation*, Edmund Spenser recalled a Mr Eske, a minister who "all on a sudden was so strangely transported with the thoughts of the joys of Heaven, that he said with a great deal of passion, *What Music! Sin, shall there be in heaven? O the spiritual joy and melody that there we shall have!*" Eske was a Puritan, whose theology would allow that perfection in music (as in all things) was to be experienced only posthumously. Definitive editions

and hi-fi have shortened the musical pilgrim's progress, so that recordings of madrigals, motets, virginals and consort music may now seem to provide an earthly paradise.

Mr Price's book is a splendid corrective to the sentimental approach which may not only affect the reading of musical history but also standards of performance. It studies the economic and political of one area of social activity (but within sight of others), towards which principles inherent in a general system of values directed the attention of those who aspired to power. From Elyot's *The Governour*, of 1531, to Peacham's *Compendium Gentilium*, published ninety years later, a splendid consensus obtained, which put into the concept of government the premise that the governor should be a gentleman more than that (and however the definition is interpreted), he should be an educated gentleman. On the whole – as Thomas Morley and Nicholas Yonge testified – neither the aristocratic countryman nor the city gentleman would have failed an examination in musical appreciation.

Secularization of the idea of the ineffable excellence of music took place after, and in no small measure in consequence of, the dissolution of the monasteries. Techniques passed over from motet to madrigal, and were improved by exposure to Italian and Flemish influence through the importation of music and musicians. The lead was given by the Tudor court, whose lavish expenditure on music and pageantry was a general inspiration; so that in particularly hard times the level of unemployment was kept down by wide-spread patronage. Investment in

music by a number of the most powerful families in the land – Petres, Talbotts, Cavendishes, Kyrlees, Howards, Somersets, Cecils and Dudleys – is described by Price in detail after thorough scrutiny of the respective household accounts. The evidence assembled shows how standards of musical literacy were raised throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. More than any other factor, perhaps, this was responsible for the explosion of part-song composition that characterized the period and (since part-singing happily continued from then till now) furnished the essential features of a native musical culture.

The place of the musician within the sixteenth-seventeenth-century framework is made abundantly clear. Somersets driven into private employment by reasons of fluctuating ecclesiastical patronage, or accepting it as a convenient way of professional advancement, he came to serve a variety of functions: as teacher, as performer, as general factotum, as a disposable asset – a well-developed transfer system existed – even as family friend and confidant. In general, the household musician was a gentleman's gentleman. The role of musician could, however, cover other functions. Thomas Morley was not the only musician who was a secret service agent but, according to Price, he could have been more fashionably a double agent. Otherwise, there were sympathetic families who maintained Catholic priests ostensibly as music teachers, and sometimes they were reported to the Government for so doing.

A particularly illuminating section of

Price's book concerns the tenacity of the leading Catholic households not only in protecting their faith but also music and musicians as a vital means of preserving that faith. Above all this Byrd, whose reputation secured by his status of near equality with the political eminences and by the favour of Queen Elizabeth – was unassailable. But the hard-line Protestants – the Dudleys and the Cecils, for example – while preferring the doctrinal manifest to the metrical psalm to that in the Latin Mass or motet, appreciated the advantages that derived from ostentatious patronage, particularly on the vulgar scale of the Kenilworth Entertainment of 1575.

The regions studied in detail here are in those parts of England which are still, for the most part, the most prosperous today. But in the North there were families sometimes of more local than national importance – Stanleys, Shuttleworths, Legis, Heskeths, Ashlows, among the Yorkshire gentry, whose patronage needs to be reviewed in considering the whole scene. While patronage in general was private rather than public, there were bodies of civic musicians – the town waits who were

often hired by northern households for special occasions – who bridged social divisions, by accommodating themselves to the gentry on the one hand and to the commonality on the other.

Renaissance England was a small world, and Mr Price gives a clear view of one part of it. Only once does he seem to fall for the Elizabethan tendency to hyperbole that caused Virginia Woolf to wonder how people at that time actually addressed each other. An organ, admittedly described as "huge", built for the Cecils at Hatfield, was reported to have cost "one thousand and sixty pounds"; a few years later Dallam's famous organ at York cost £297. The book is elegantly produced (though "Edward" Spencer and Bishop's "Storford" have somehow slipped into the bibliographic detail), and contains maps, genealogical tables, and illustrations. And Mr Price occasionally shows a nice dry humour: eg. the artist cooperated with the patron "under the conditions of the management – rarely under those of the union". Even if the contemporary term now is sponsor rather than patron, it cannot be said that the relationship has greatly altered.

## Appropriate feelings

By Malcolm Budd

PETER KIVY:

The Corded Shell  
Reflections on Musical Expression  
167pp. Princeton University Press.  
£8.40 (paperback), £3.35.  
0 691 07258 2

Elgar's *Suspiri* expresses a mood of profound sorrow and a sense of irrecoverable loss; the opening of Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony is imbued with *joie de vivre*; the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is suffused with yearning. How are such remarks to be understood? Do they voice merely subjective responses? Or are there intersubjective criteria for the characterization of music by emotive terms? What is the aesthetic significance of hearing music as expressive of emotion? Are the emotions that we hear in a piece of music integral to the value that the music has for us as music?

Peter Kivy attempts to answer such questions as these by developing a theory of musical expressiveness which is based upon insights that he gleaned from a consideration of various writers on music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He proposes two models of musical expressiveness: the "contour" model and the "convention" model. The contour model accounts for the expressiveness of music in terms of resemblances between structural features of a musical passage and features of the expression of emotion in human utterance and behaviour. The convention model explains the expressiveness of a particular piece of music as a function of the customary association of certain features of the piece with other music that is expressive of the emotion. The convention model, therefore, unlike the contour model, could not stand alone since it presupposes an alternative model of musical expressiveness. Kivy's thesis is that these two models together account for the central cases of the musical expression of emotion. The expressiveness of a passage may be due entirely to the congruence of the musical contour and the expressive contour of the impassioned human voice and body, or entirely to customary association, or partly to the one and partly to the other. It follows that the characterization of music by emotive terms is not a merely subjective matter.

Neither of these accounts is developed. In particular, the precise sense in which we are supposed to animate music when we experience it as expressive is not made clear. Reference to make-believe and the seeing of pictorial representations is merely suggestive. In consequence Kivy's book does not contain a satisfactory theory of musical expressiveness. And without such a theory he is not well placed to explain why it is that the possession by a musical work of expressive properties is a merit of the work. He successfully defends the view that the expressive features of a piece of music are relevant to the favourable evaluation of the music, but he is not in a position to answer the question that he himself poses: What is good about a theme's being cheerful?

John Dinges and Saul Landau have written an account of how Letelier was assassinated. They are exponents of the "new journalism" which does not spare detail. We are told how many cups of coffee people have for breakfast. The weaknesses of the method, compared with more straightforward scholarship, are that it does not give authorities for its statements in a precise enough fashion, that it cannot

## The long arm of DINA

By Malcolm Deas

JOHN DINGES and SAUL LANDAU:  
Assassination on Embassy Row  
411pp. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. £6.95.  
0 906495 43 1

The "assassination on Embassy Row" was that of the exiled Chilean socialist leader Orlando Letelier, who was murdered by a bomb placed in his car in Washington. The American wife of his assistant also died in the explosion of September 21, 1976. *Assassination on Embassy Row* is an account of how the killing was planned and executed, written by a friend and colleague of Letelier's exile and by a former *Washington Post and Times* correspondent in Chile.

Letelier was killed by an agent of DINA, the Chilean secret police, who had previously murdered General Prats in Buenos Aires and barely missed killing the Christian Democrat Bernardo Leighton in Rome. The same agent, the American Michael Townley, was involved in all three cases. The last he carried out in collaboration with Cuban nationalists, whose propensity to help in the violence of others in return for nebulous promises of future aid and comfort for their own ends makes them a reservoir of mercenary criminals, ready to go because they have nowhere to go, and because they are not quite entirely mercenary. The orders for the "mission" came from General Juan Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, the head of DINA, and when he got his orders there is no knowing. The United States has not succeeded in extraditing him. As he is the former head of the secret service of a government which the United States's own CIA assisted to power, that is not surprising. As this book points out, General Pinochet might riposte by requesting Richard Helms's extradition to help clear up the death of General Schneider in 1970. Things have to stop somewhere.

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## Race before class

By Julius Lewin

DARCY DU TOIT:  
Capital and Labour in South Africa  
Class struggles in the 1970s  
495pp. Kegan Paul International. £18.  
0 7103 0001 8

The best chapters in this big book come near the end where the author analyses the theories of the African National Congress and its mentor, the South African Communist Party. Both bodies having been banned many years ago, they have to conduct their activities in exile and for the most part in secrecy. However, more than enough material has been published to enable Darcy du Toit to show the weaknesses and contradictions in the thinking of both organizations. They are haunted by the old problem, whether to give priority to race or to class. All over Africa race has proved to be a more emotional and therefore a more dynamic element than class. But white revolutionaries are understandably chary of building their strategy on race. Even in South Africa, where tribal differences are much weaker than elsewhere in the continent, race must be held back. For one thing, Africans form only about two-thirds of the total population. There are, apart from four million whites, two million Cape Coloureds and nearly a million Asians,

see the difference between an important fact and an unimportant one, that it goes on far too long and, at the end, is incapable of delivering a satisfactory explanation of why things occur. To take an example from the *fronts et origines* of "new journalism" (and another where the criminal infamy were Cuban mercenaries), Watergate why they raided that hotel, why Mr Nixon wished to tape absolutely everything, why his friends and subordinates were the sort of people they were, are questions all too easily lost in paragraphs that open with precise times, are decorated with seemingly authentic vignettes, and which cut from face to face, place to place like a film script. Mr Landau makes films. There is a rumour that they are going to make a film of this work, which will show a larger audience how experts were wrong in concluding that "the reach of DINA almost certainly (80%) does not extend to the United States".

This will only show how Letelier was killed, not why. It will show the technique of placing a bomb and detonating it with a converted bleeper, a murder that shocks the more immediately because it took place in the heart of Washington, because it was carried out by a foreign governmental agency and because one of its victims was a prominent Chilean exile. A change of venue, of assassin and victims – in assassination, we do send to ask for whom the bell tolls – and we might concentrate more on causes and less on the enormity of the act. This book is a convincingly detailed account both of the killing and of the investigation and trial that are themselves investigated and tried by the authors to see how much America and her agencies have pulled together again since Watergate and the departures of J. Edgar Hoover, Dr Kissinger and Mr Helms. But beyond that it is, as before, a memorial, sentimental.

Orlando Letelier had charm, intelligence and courage. He seems also to have been a high-living cosmopolitan international bureaucrat socialist. The authors of this book do not convince me that Letelier turned down an offer of a job from "Che" Guevara to help "direct" the Cuban economy because he felt that he could help Latin America more from a position in the Inter-American Development Bank with Felipe Herrera. There were differences in pay and conditions and prospects, as well as in the level of economic competence. Letelier spent most of his working life outside Chile; as the books says, this made him,

through his contacts and *support*, a more dangerous enemy to the military government than other more Chilean figures. It also exposes a less attractive side of Chilean socialism and the Unidad Popular: the enormous number of highly paid international economists in its ranks and among its admirers who had never been truly responsible for anything, not even their own opinions. It was some years a bad day for Chile when the Economic Commission for Latin America was housed in Santiago.

The events in this book originate, like so many other horrors, in the policies of the southern countries of South America in the early 1970s, and it is time to think again about those policies, perhaps even to admit that European and North American romanticism who flattered so many local illusions should bear some of the blame for what happened. There was more wrong with the scheme than just the presence of the last Prussian army left in the world, waiting in the wings: that is not the only reason that General Pinochet is in power. Exile stops the docks of all but the ablest politicians. One cannot tell from this book how his experience of the coup and imprisonment on Dawson Island affected Letelier's thinking. In exile he liked the United States, because he felt safe there and at home. His party, however,

liked holding their meetings in Cuba, because security was better. The contradictions are obvious, and it seems typical of sympathizers with Unidad Popular to ignore them.

Chile is a country bedevilled by fashionableness, by a need to be in the vanguard of something, by ideological obsessions. This has not changed since 1973, and even if the inscrutable General Pinochet himself has no such weakness, his entourage certainly does. So do lesser figures, such as Michael Townley the assassin, who unlike the interminably sentenced Cubans is any time now due for a release stipulated in his plea-bargain, and a new life under yet another identity. Unlike most of the foreign romanticism present in Allende's Chile, Townley did not hail the Chilean Road to Socialism. He and his Chilean wife joined Patria y Libertad, the militant right-wing of a country not his own, and later its national security agency. DINA under General Contreras was both nationalist and ambitious; it did not want any foreign approval, it wanted "trench". Townley was a gifted amateur in electronics, radio and bombs. He also had his limited imagination, one that fed on having a commission in a secret army; he was an intelligence and assassination buff, as the Americans might have put it. He entered a world where vocabulary and

## Battle of the robots

By Noble Frankland

NORMAN LONGMATE:  
The Doodlebugs  
The Story of the Flying-Bomb  
548pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.  
0 09 144750 X

The pilotless planes, robots, flying bombs, V1s or Doodlebugs, as they were variously called, killed about 6,000 British civilians and just under 3,000 servicemen. The counter-measures aimed at stopping them cost the lives of 2,900 Allied airmen, mostly of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command. Mistfires and the like cost the Germans only 185 lives. For the equivalent of every pound which the Germans spent on projecting the V1s at England and Britain (and the Americans) spent five pounds in trying to stop them doing so. The campaign began in June 1944 and was largely over by September, though small-scale attacks lasted nearly to the end of the war in May 1945. Londoners, who received about forty per cent of all the bombs which got through, were the chief victims, but life was also uncomfortable in Kent and Sussex or "Doodlebug Alley" as it was known.

Certainly the Germans scored a point with this new weapon. Despite the advance warning which British Intelligence and photographic reconnaissance gave, it took the defences a long time to get on top of the threat and the counter-measures, as the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, Sir Arthur Harris, predicted, proved to be largely ineffective.

Who then was the victor in the campaign? The answer to that question is perhaps the only point upon which Norman Longmate is not quite clear or, to be more precise, not quite convincing. In a study otherwise notable for the lucidity of its expression and the comprehensiveness of its coverage. In truth, as at the Battle of Britain, it was the Germans who carried the day but the British who gained the advantage. The V1 campaign failed to disrupt the invasion of Normandy or the relentless, though disappointingly slow, advance of General Eisenhower's armies to the centre of Germany. Though it did momentarily raise German spirits, it failed to have any marked or lasting effect there too. In fact, the V1s were

too few and too late to make any significant difference, except, of course, to those they killed, maimed or in other ways deprived. Yet the V1 campaign, or "Crisisshow" as the British coded it, is a fascinating subject well worth the labour, skill and understanding which Mr Longmate has so amply devoted to it.

For those with their own memories of the V1 the book will be riveting and I suspect that few will find a false note struck in it. I myself recall quite clearly watching the things come down in London and, in great numbers, in the fields of Sussex, and I remember one hitting Brill Hill not far from Oxford, which must have been an "over" probably individually investigated, though not actually mentioned, by Mr Longmate. I also remember navigating a Lancaster in bombing attacks on the launching ramps in the Pas de Calais and, most particularly, the underground V1 storage depot at St Leu d'Esserent. On the basis of those three viewpoints, I can assure readers of this book, who perhaps may have no personal experience of the events, that Longmate paints not merely a convincing, but also a true picture. He understands the facts and senses the atmosphere. He has had the patience, perseverance and sensitivity to understand the times of which he writes and he communicates all in an easily readable form. Though the pages go past effortlessly the book is scholarly in the sense that its words are minutely adjusted to the evidence upon which it is founded and the evidence, though agreeably unobtrusive, is fully paraded for those who want it.

Much of what is nowadays written about the Second World War, reflecting, as is natural, the reaction of succeeding generations to their war-time predecessors, is imbued with prejudices and passions, not of the war years, but of the present age. Longmate is delightfully and most refreshingly free from this fault. In describing the highly important role of Herbert Morrison, for example, he gives full credit where credit is due and also mentions that Morrison suggested that, as a deterrent to V1 landings, the Pas de Calais should be drenched with poison gas. To the reminder that the Pas de Calais was full of Frenchmen, Morrison responded with the observation that they had no business to be there. In writing of the parts played in the battle against the V1s by Fighter Com-

mand (at the time barbarously renamed Air Defence of Great Britain) and the anti-aircraft gunners, he shows how the rivalry between those who fought on the ground and in the air sometimes took on the characteristics of class warfare; but he avoids the Leo Deighton syndrome of crystallizing this kind of issue around who had or had not been to a public school. In describing Bomber Command's use in the campaign, he shows how the selective attack on Peenemünde and the precision bombing of the launching ramps in the Pas de Calais had a barely perceptible effect upon the schedule of development and, when it was developed, the firing of the V1. He does show, however, that the routine general-area bombing of Kassel on October 22, 1943, seriously dislocated the production of the V1s and delayed their operational introduction. In the Pas de Calais, he claims no more than that from time to time it afforded some useful confirmatory evidence. He is kinder than most to the contribution of Lord Duncan-Sandys, to whom Churchill gave ministerial responsibility for the national reaction to the rumour and later the actuality of the V-weapons threat, and he is not entirely blinded by the dazzling deductions of R. V. Jones.

Such unfashionable revelations and reactions on the part of Mr Longmate show that he is after the truth and not the embellishment of a myth. As generally happens when this is the case, a study which is ostensibly about a specialized aspect of a subject reveals insights into much larger areas of understanding. Here there is primary evidence as to how governments, military commanders, local authorities and ordinary people react to new and almost uncharted threats, as well as to the distinctive temperaments of town and country dwellers and the differing priorities of men and women. Some strange ironies are also revealed. The strangest of all must surely be that the most indiscriminate of weapons, known indeed as a Robot, did after all offer its potential victims an opportunity of saving themselves, and the ways in which people learnt to dodge the Doodlebugs was a factor not all that much less important than the eventual success of the coastal anti-aircraft guns, aided and abetted by the latest radar and the proximity fuse.

## Bourgeois complicities

By Michael Tanner

THEODOR ADORNO:

In Search of Wagner  
Translated by Rodney Livingstone  
159pp. New Left Books. £7.50.  
0 86091 037 7

This volume was first published in Germany in 1952, but Adorno tells us in the Preface that it was written in late 1937 and early 1938, which may help to make us less intolerant of much of its tone and substance than we might otherwise justifiably be. Though its tone is relentlessly polemical, it is remarkably free of contemporary references. Wagner's art is related throughout to his personality and to the "social realities" of the nineteenth century, and a great deal is made of his complicity with his bourgeois masters and audience, the "terrorist" of his mode of communication (the conductor's baton beating the audience into submission) and his anti-Semitism; in this presentation Wagner is too much a mere manifestation of late capitalism to be singled out as the artistic inspirer of the Third Reich.

The species of anti-Wagnerism with which we have been most familiar since the end of the Second World War is not much to be found here, though the characteristic cheapness of such Wagner-baters as Jacques Barzun and Robert Gutman is adumbrated in occasional passages. Thus we are told that "the glorified blood-brotherhood of Parsifal is the prototype of the sworn confraternities of the secret societies and Filhrer-orders of later years", a thought taken over by many less dexterous and sophisticated operators than Adorno, despite its transparent idiosyncrasy. The Knights of the Grail are not blond-brothers; they are not glorified but subject to critique, by Wagner; and they are no more a secret society than any other monastic institution. Mozart's Sarastro and his initiates are much more plausible candidates with the "sinisterly erotic" Monstrance, mysteriously retained in service in spite of his malevolence and lechery, and the proclivity of Sarastro and his priests to subject innocents to bewildering interrogations and arbitrary favours and ordeals. But *that* connection is never made.

Adorno writes in a style which strangely blends the epigrammatic, the technical, and the merely jargon-

ridden into a turgid torrent. Beginning with inquisitorial analyses of some key statements in the texts of the very early operas (though *Die Feen* is exempted), he moves into some moderately intimidating musical analysis of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, in order to demonstrate their extreme ideological unacceptability, and then passes, for most of the book, into sweeping accounts of the greater works, rarely descending to detail. The texture of the prose is most reminiscent of what people who don't know Wagner's works think their musical texture is like: thick, sluggish, "technically heavy", and formless. Actually this is the work of someone who knows Wagner's works so well that he is able to be ingeniously tendentious about them to a degree that must arouse the suspicions of the least partisan reader.

A point is reached where it becomes unclear what Wagner could or should have written to rescue himself from a further onslaught from Adorno: one is not surprised that at their celebrated meeting Adorno denounced Popper, who is laudably keen on people stating what would count as a refutation of their views, as a "positivist". That term, whose meaning in Adorno's work is totally unclear, is frequently used against Wagner. So one has to cope with this kind of thing: "In the womb of Wagner's late-Romanticism, a positivistic element is engendered, not unlike the positivistic and scientific twist given to Kantian idealism by Schopenhauer's metaphysics." Apart from this wholly baffling characterization of Schopenhauer, expressions such as "not unlike" and Adorno's favourite "it is no accident that" occur so often that it becomes apparent he is prepared to allow himself to make any connection that will further his attack. One would be wiser to take in Wagner's tendency if his rare emergences from opacity were more reassuring, but when investigating against Wagner's sense of humour Adorno writes:

The use of laughter to suspend justice is debased into a charter for injustice. When Wotan dupes the giants who had been promised Freia in the contract, he does so by pretending that the contract had all been a joke. "How cunning to take in earnest what was agreed only in jest" (*Rheingold*, sc.2). The insistence that something is all a joke is a time-honoured device for rationalizing the worst. . . . Wagner's music, too, is a worthy lad that treats the

villains in like manner [to a sadistic German fairy-tale], and the comedy of their suffering not only gives pleasure to whoever inflicts it; it also stifles any question about its justification and tacitly presents itself as the ultimate authority.

Adorno's grand manner is comically at odds with his critical naivety here; he thinks that Wagner is endorsing Wotan's injustice, whereas it should be clear that in *Das Rheingold* he is presenting Wotan in the most unfavourable light, and that it is Wotan's monstrous behaviour in that work which necessitates the rest of the *Ring*. Naivety or dishonesty; it makes little difference to one's sense that Adorno's extraordinary erudition is not at the service of disinterested critical perception.

Even so, *In Search of Wagner* is worth the labour of finishing: when highly intelligent people are either besotted by love or filled with hatred, they may still have insights that are denied to the cool appraiser. And as in its last fifty pages Adorno's book gains momentum, he makes some points that any serious admirer of Wagner's work needs to ponder, if he is prepared to disentangle them from pretentiously worked expressions of loathing. Adorno is especially perceptive (and especially difficult) when he returns, at the end, to Wagner's relationship to Schopenhauer, and to the characteristic tendency of Wagner's heroes and heroines to long for nothingness, oblivion, and to equate these with redemption:

The passage in Act II of *Tristan* where the horn in the orchestra soars above the boundary separating nothingness and something to catch the echo of the shepherd's melancholy song as Tristan stirs – that passage will survive as long as the fundamental experiences of the bourgeois era can still be felt by human beings.

At such moments one suspects that Adorno is not so unequivocally hostile to Wagner, or even to the bourgeois era, as he would like to be, as a card-carrying member of the Frankfurt School. As in all the most fervent critics of Wagner, from Nietzsche onwards, the tone of unwilling admiration emerges, especially for *Tristan*, the early Wagnerian work, and leads one to wonder yet again at Wagner's power to excite a unique degree of animosity which can never quite sustain itself.







## Managing the manager

By Harold Hobson

JULIE HOLLEDGE:  
Innocent Flowers  
Women in the Edwardian Theatre  
218pp. Virago, 19.95.  
0 86088 070 3

Julie Hodge declares that she likes challenging statements, and she begins her entertaining and instructive book with appropriate belligerence: "The actress's position in any society that is dominated by men is an ambiguous one. She is successful in so far as she can recreate male images of women. Yet she may be regarded for this knack of pleasing with the freedom to reject and challenge these very fantasies." But her book is capable of a very different interpretation from that which she herself puts upon it. For it may be argued that the theatre of the early years of the century, despite the proliferation of actor-managers, was in reality dominated, not by men, but by women.

None of the actresses in *Innocent Flowers* in the slightest degree resembles male fantasies of women as unbusinesslike, fragile creatures dependent on the guidance and authority of men. There are no Dora Spenlows or Amelia Sedgwick here. People like Athene Seyler, Lena Ashwell, Elizabeth Robins and Irene Vanbrugh were not on the stage in order to be pushed around by male superiors. Miss Hodge shows, perhaps without realizing it, that actresses by a means behaved as though they were in a society dominated by men, even when

the men were actually in a position of superiority and power. Irene Vanbrugh, when she had had only one part in a London production, went to the Haymarket Theatre, presented her visiting card - "a very common little card", she said - and demanded to see Heinrich Free. Very few men would have dared to do that. Not only did Free see her, but when she demanded a part in one of his productions, he gave it to her, after feeling protesting that she was already bound to another manager who was one of his friends. And when Miss Vanbrugh demanded that it she came to Free she would expect her salary to be increased, the great man meekly agreed.

Irene Vanbrugh does not appear to have been exceptional. Athene Seyler was equally determined to stand on her own feet. When she applied for admission to the (not-then-Royal) Academy of Dramatic Art, Bancroft took one look at her, and said that he was sorry, but she had no qualification for the stage. Miss Seyler was not in the least disconcerted. "I know what you mean," she replied, "I'm very plain but I'm sure if you heard me recite, you'd change your mind". He did change his mind, and she became the Academy's third Gold Medalist.

The opposition that women who wanted to go on the stage had to surmount came not from the men who were already there, but from their parents. This Miss Hodge shows vividly enough. Athene Seyler herself had to struggle for a year with her father and mother would agree to her choice of profession. The theatre was long a disreputable profession. In 1880 the Association for the Employment of

Women was set up, and disseminated its views in a magazine called *The Englishwoman's Journal*, which argued that women should be employed as hairdressers, hotel managers, wood engravers, dispensers, house decorators, watchmakers and telegraphists. But, says Miss Hodge, it "showed little interest in the theatrical profession".

Yet the theatre was one of the very few professions that gave to women great privileges and opportunities. Successful actresses were an especially favoured section of the community, and were freely allowed indulgences that would have ruined a Prime Minister. The husbands of actresses who had married do not appear to have expected them to carry out the conventional duties of wives. Ellen Terry had three husbands (the last of whom was four years younger than her son), but neither of her children was by any of her husbands.

Why did actresses have such a splendid time? Miss Hodge thinks that it is because they submitted themselves to the wishes and fantasies of men. But in her instructive and readable book, she underestimates the audience. But, Maugham insisted, the emotion of the audience is a vital part of the theatrical experience. Now in the first part of the century the majority of most audiences were women. Terence Rattigan instinctively called audiences Aunt Edna, not Uncle Edwards. This classification was never challenged. Henry James wrote: "There is almost always an old lady taking seats for the play . . . . The

number of old ladies one has to squeeze past in the stalls is very striking". It was the audience that dominated the society in which women in the theatre had to work. These audiences were, mostly, conventional enough in their private lives. But the probability is that in the lives of actresses they vicariously fulfilled desires which they would not ordinarily have admitted. It was women rather than men who fell in love with the trim, neat and saucy figure of Vestal Tilley. That there might be a touch of lesbianism in this Miss Hodge does not very emphatically deny. Indeed there is a note of lesbianism running through much of her book, and it comes out very loudly in her long study of the Pioneer Players, and Edith Craig, Christopher St John and Clare Atwood.

For all their power and independence, though, actresses had to work in theatres dominated by male actor-managers; and it was natural at a time of feminist activity in other areas that they should have pressed for the establishment of organizations which would put on plays of their own choosing. The first public meeting was held at the Criterion Restaurant in

## Backstage effort

By Julie Hankey

JIM HILEY:

Theatre at Work  
The story of the National Theatre's production of Brecht's *Galileo*  
239pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 19.75.  
0 7100 0815 5

After Ken Tynan's book on another John Dexter production - *Othello*, the *National Theatre production* - one comes to this account of the National's *Galileo* with false expectations. What Jim Hiley's book is not is a close account, scene by scene, speech by speech, of how Dexter and Gribble arrived at a given interpretation. Perhaps the very nature of the play precludes it. What Hiley does instead is to reconstruct the whole paraphernalia of a production. That of course includes the acting, but with the emphasis distributed evenly between the production's design and management, and the play itself.

The whole process lasted five and a half months, and during it Hiley was given licence to record everything from the great steel-assembling operations of the set-builders to the embarrassing private dressings-down by Dexter of individual actors. Because of their involvement in other shows, the actors themselves were a late arrival, joining the enterprise for about the last third of it.

With costing forecasts to consider, the National's administration pressed the designer, Jocelyn Herbert, to present the finished design early. "Actors" had therefore been moving in miniature for months round a model of the Olivier Old Vic within a year or so of the novel's publication. That fact accounts for much of the novel's oddity.

In his last chapter, John Atkins presents Priestley himself as a mystery: JBP is a thousand active particles, pulling in a dozen directions - romancing with Yorkshire councillors, soberly attending Football League matches, deploring the wretched pension schemes for broken-down workers, looking back to the future and forward to the Past, writing Hollywood scripts out of industrial fantasy, seeing Dostoevsky and Proust and Lawrence plain and not distorted by prejudice, knowing that society is an intricate web that cannot be abstracted from, dancing a gay galliard on the beds of drowsy professors, delighting in pipes and jokes and saying Ban! - when and where does one stop?

That quotation shows the ground covered in this book, and it illustrates John Atkins's willingness to represent all the vagaries of his subject, without interposing any further issues or methodical critical enquiry. It is a short and enthusiastic survey of a long literary life.

As an actor himself, Hiley has a nose for backstage dramas. The people who executed Herbert's sketches were so beset by misunderstandings and uncertain lines of responsibility that he has plenty of scope here. With three days to go before the first preview, for example, major alterations had to be made to the substructure of the raised stage: "Milone further claimed, and Taylor denied, that the whole installation had been carried out three or four inches out of position under Taylor's command . . . whoever was responsible, the floor boards would have to come up again. . . . One of [the crew] protested: 'Why didn't we do this fucking yesterday?'" What might be dismissed as mere gossip does in fact tell us something about the pressures people worked under.

The exasperation, Hiley is quick to point out, was always an expression of perfectionism, and wherever he went he uncovered extraordinary scenes of diligence: the false nose department specially designing a nose for the balladeer that would allow his own to vibrate during his song; the man who spent three weeks on revisions of the Pope's crown, decorating it at last with mouldings taken from keyhole coverings; the people who twice removed and reapplied leaf pressings on a candelabrum which they, correctly, never believed would be used. In retrospect a production as a whole is as peculiar and self-contained as the performance itself, and in noting these things the book gets in on the birth of theatrical nostalgia.

Dexter, in keeping with the technical absorption round him, rehearsed his actors with an ear for clarity and pace rather than psychological depth. It is not Michael Gambon who gradually developing *Galileo* who figures largely in the rehearsals, but the dozens of small-part players who were drilled into expressiveness with pleas to "bite on the text" and "clatter your teeth round the words". Nor, we learn, did he dish out wads of theory. The Marxist versus humanist controversy over whether to include the last scene, which exercised him, the translator Howard Brenton, and Jocelyn Herbert, was finally settled on theatrical grounds. It stayed, not because Dexter wanted to avoid ending on a personal note, but because he thought the scene worked. He rehearsed ruthlessly, treating his actors like a writer his words; ransacking them for their possibilities, and if necessary scrapping them altogether. Actors were sometimes dismayed, not so much by the rigours of working with him, as by the camp wasspishness which has, apparently, made him notorious.

Nevertheless it says something for the book that with all its raw material for backstage gossip, what sticks in the mind is the multifariously corporate (if not entirely cooperative) effort, and its hundred or so photographs by Zoë Dominik emphasize that rather than the personalities.

## Keeping it theoretical

By Peter Carey

R. S. NEALE

Class in English History 1680-1850  
250pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £12.  
0 631 12851 4

This book has been prompted by R. S. Neale's concern for what he describes as "the parlous state" of social history today. Despite a great variety of social history, there are, in Professor Neale's opinion, very few social historians and those few suffer from a continuing uncertainty about the nature and status of their subject.

Although Neale agrees with E. J. Hobsbawm that social history is essentially the Marxist materialist conception of history, he stresses that there is a paramount need for historians to be clear in their own minds about the ideas of class and class consciousness embodied in that conception. This is all the more urgent, in Neale's view, for even non-Marxist historians, consciously or not, have been influenced by Marxist materialism, and there is a great need at present to define the

relationship between theory and history. Without this definition, Neale fears that social historians will be content to follow their own private pursuits and a true discipline of social history will never emerge.

In order to guard against this, Neale argues that social historians should recognize that the core of their discipline is akin to the sociology of knowledge, and that social history must define itself by its procedures. In fact, he suggests that social history should have three procedural strands each of which can draw upon recent work in social history. First, it must be specifically theoretical. Neale's preference here is for a Marxist theory. Second, social history must focus on social structure and the changes which take place within that social structure, particularly the family group. Here Neale advocates a cross-cultural approach including a comparison with non-western societies. At the same time he argues that social history should draw attention to the paramount importance of the expanding urban environments in which the individual and the family have made their homes, and the social groups to which those individuals belong. In Neale's view, both of these sets of structures must be observed within

specific and changing economic modes of production.

Third, social history should be as far as possible a "holistic" science comprising a study of the ideas, knowledge and culture of communities and dealing with human perception as expressed in the highest branches of thought as well as everyday attitudes and acts. The most challenging and difficult task for the social historian, according to Neale, is to delineate objectively the inter-connections between these procedural strands, particularly between social structure or classes and thought. Hence the importance, in his view, of theory.

In the light of all this, *Class in English History 1680-1850* examines some of the claims made by social historians, in particular when they use the concepts of class and class consciousness in their attempts to explain the history of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The starting point for this essay is Neale's discussion of Marx's views about class and class consciousness, which sets the tone for the rest of the book. Although the main area of his discourse is essentially theoretical and methodological, Neale has ranged very widely over questions of history and historiography, and has

incorporated many of his own recent researches, especially on the relationship between art and ideas, the social ideas of the "Ricardian Socialists", the relationship between women and class consciousness, and the social history of birth in the period covered. His purpose is not just to add another description or narrative of class formation, which he has already done in *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (1972), where he advanced his now much debated Five-Class Model of society, but to conduct a dialogue with students of history and social theory. He focuses this on the ways they have used or are still using concepts of class and class consciousness as a central organizing theme in their accounts of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century English society.

Like the series of lectures and seminar papers from which this book originally sprang, Neale's work is explicitly intended to be argued over and to start a debate which will help to define procedures in social history and delineate more clearly the nature of the social historian's task. Essentially, he is appealing to all those who share his disquiet about the prevalent belief that solutions in history can always be found in more of the "facts", in ever

more detailed descriptions of isolated or discrete events, and that empirical history can somehow function as its own court of appeal.

Although I myself cannot accept Neale's central contention that "history must become theoretical or else it will become irrelevant", I found his book exceedingly stimulating and challenging, and one which at the very least is destined to provoke just the sort of debate which he hopes for. Particularly striking is his intriguing comparison of Harold Perkin's view of England in the eighteenth century as a classless society characterized by strong vertical patron-client relationships, with the more truly vertical social structure of Tokugawa Japan as described in Chie Nakane's *Japanese Society* (1973). It is clear that this and many other ideas, including Roland Mousnier's typology of social stratification which concentrates on classification by order rather than classes, would benefit greatly from a similar comparison with work on non-western societies. R. S. Neale's book should be read not only by all students of modern English society, both Marxist and non-Marxist, but by all those interested in social history in general, both western and non-western.

## Capturing the lion

By R. H. C. Davis

R. C. JOHNSTON (Editor and Translator):  
Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle  
214pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £20.  
0 19 815758 4

Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* is a poem of 2065 lines in Anglo-Norman French about the great revolt of 1173-4 against King Henry II. The principal rebel was the King's eldest son, "the young king", and his revolt was dangerous because it was supported not only by many lords in England and in Normandy and Brittany, but also by the Kings of France and Scotland. Jordan Fantosme is concerned primarily with the Scottish campaign, which came to an abrupt end with the capture of the Scots King, William the Lion, at Alnwick, and with the campaign in East Anglia where Robert Earl of Leicester was defeated at Fornham St Genevieve.

The story is told in the manner of a *chanson de geste*, great dramatic effect being gained by the statement that William the Lion was captured on the very morning that King Henry II "made his peace" with St Thomas the Martyr at Canterbury. Henry did not hear the glad news till he had moved on to London. The poem tells us how he had gone to bed "and was propped up on his elbow, with a servant gently rubbing his feet", when the messenger arrived from Alnwick, having ridden rather than walked for three days. "With nothing to drink or eat for three days" - his name was Brien and he was in the service of Ranulf Glanville. At first the chamberlain would not let him in, but eventually the king heard the noise he was making and ordered him to be admitted. At first he was stupefied by the news:

"Is the King of Scotland a prisoner? Tell me truly!" "Yes, sire, by my faith! Let me be nailed to a cross or strung up by a rope or burned in a fierce fire, if tomorrow ere midday everything be not confirmed!" Then says King Henry: "Thanks be to God, and to St Thomas the Martyr, and to all the saints of God!"

The *Chronicle* has survived in two manuscripts, one at Durham and the other at Lincoln, but it was first published in 1840 by a Frenchman, Francisque Michel, whose work has been the basis of subsequent editions by Howlett and Becker. The fact that has induced R. C. Johnston to do the work again is that these previous editors had not been able to make out how the verses were supposed to scan. The general opinion was that Jordan Fantosme, no matter how good he was as a story-teller, did not know much about poetry.

Now all that is changed. Taking up the work where the late Iain Mac-

donald had left it, Professor Johnston has solved the riddle of the prosody. In his edition the poem is divided into 217 lines to fifty-nine, and every line is printed as two hemistichs, with a gap in the middle to indicate the caesura. This is not how the poem is set out in either manuscript, but Professor Johnston justifies his method by showing that, applied systematically throughout the poem, it becomes clear that Jordan Fantosme was a bold experimenter and a skilful craftsman, writing in five one to the other with great dramatic effect. To a layman Johnston's exposition is wholly convincing, even if it leaves one somewhat critical of the poet whose metres have baffled modern scholars for more than a century. Johnston states that he cannot see "how recital could make anybody aware of the complicated relationships" of the lines in the most complicated passages. But here, at any rate, the student will find the distribution of different metres set out in tabular form, while the footnotes (printed at the end) provide a detailed running commentary.

The poem must have been written before the death of the "young king" in 1183, but that does not mean that it is correct in all its details. Jordan claims to have seen the capture of William the Lion "with his own eyes", but just as a newspaper report can be immediate but mistaken, so can the narrative even of an eye-witness who is determined to make his work a literary masterpiece. Marjorie Chibnall has commented recently on the speed of the growth of epic legend by pointing out how Orderic Vitalis, writing within four or five years of the Battle of Fraga (1134), has added a final scene which is "pure fiction" and almost transforms defeat into victory.

Who was Jordan Fantosme? The bishop of Winchester had a clerk called Master Jordanus Fantasma who claimed a monopoly of the schools at Winchester (where he had a house in Minster Street) and who was accused by another clerk of having caused the death of his father. Possibly also he was a pupil of Gilbert de la Porée, but no contemporary refers to him as a poet or chronicler. Johnston professes himself puzzled by his praise of Norfolk, but that surely should be connected with his interest in, and admiration for, Ranulf Glanville and his messenger Brien. Johnston also suggests that "Fantosme or Fantasma with the meaning 'illusion' . . . would be a nickname for someone whose qualities were the opposite to those suggested by his name." Would it not have been more suitable for someone who claimed to know everything, and to have seen things with his own eyes as if he had been an ever present ghost or phantom?

## Managing the monastery

By Rosalind Hill

SALLY N. VAUGHN:

The Abbey of Bec and the Anglo-Norman State 1034-1136  
168pp. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, £17.50.  
0 85115 140 X

This scholarly and interesting book consists of a short essay on the secular history of the Abbey of Bec during the lives of its first four abbots, to which are appended translations of early lives of the founding fathers of the monastery. Herliu, Lanfranc, Anselm (in the version by Ralph de Diceto, since an admirable translation of Eadmer's life has already been published by Sir Richard Southern), William de Beaumont and Bosco. Sally Vaughn is content to leave the spiritual and intellectual history of Bec to others; she concentrates her researches firmly upon the feudal and political relationships of this remarkable monastery which, established between 1034 and 1037 with poor endowments and an almost Cistercian determination to renounce the world, became by the end of the century one of the main centres of monastic reform in Normandy and contributed two of our most famous archbishops to the see of Canterbury.

Except for the Duke of Normandy, Bec depended upon no local patron. Lanfranc and Anselm, respectively one of the leading canonists and one of the most profound theologians of the age, were drawn to Bec largely because of its unusually privileged position. Like Cluny it had succeeded in remaining exempt both from its local bishop and archbishop and from the potentially interfering patronage of local magnates. Where Cluny depended directly upon the pope, Bec, growing up in the older tradition of co-operation between saintly founder and secular ruler, relied upon the protection of the Duke of Normandy, although the abbot did not do homage to him. And, unlike Cluny, Bec never developed the overpowering round of splendid liturgical observances which took up so much time as to frighten away potentially learned recruits.

It was fortunate for Herliu's monastery that the period of its greatest fame coincided with the life of Duke William of Normandy. William was a genuinely devout reformer, but he was also a good judge of men, and a ruler who was prepared to stand on nonsense. He seems to have been deeply impressed by both Lanfranc and Anselm not only as saintly monks but also as men thoroughly experienced and efficient in worldly affairs. He did

not hesitate to commit the kingdom of England, in his absence, to the regency of an archbishop whose practical experience had been gained in administering the immunities and estates of the Abbey of Bec where, in the days of Abbot Herliu's old age, most of the practical work of government had become the responsibility of Prior Lanfranc. Abbot Anselm's European reputation as a theologian and a teacher, so simply demonstrated in his own words, and in the biography written by his friend Eadmer, has made us see him as something of an unwelcome saint, driven to political action by the inexorable pressure of a moral principle. In reality, like many saints, he appears to have had a strong sense of responsibility for the legal rights of his abbey and a determination to keep those rights intact against the encroachments either of diocesan bishop or of neighbouring landlord.

Yet the reforms of Bec proved in the long run to be too successful for the permanent reputation of the monastery itself. Lanfranc and Anselm established the traditions of Bec in the English church, but without the stimulus of their presence the school in Normandy faded into obscurity. Under the rule of Anselm's successors, William de Beaumont and Bosco, it is clear that the influence of the abbey was waning and that its immunities were being slowly whittled away. The monks themselves seem to have realised that they were living in the twilight of a golden past, for it was in this period that they took care to write the biographies of their great men and to record for posterity the rights and liberties with which their house had been endowed.

Dr Vaughn has done valuable work in setting the reformers of Bec solidly against the pattern of feudal society and her book should find a place in the libraries of all serious students of the history of the Anglo-Norman church.

## Falling tragically

By Claire Cross

NANCY LENZ HARVEY:  
Thomas Cardinal Wolsey  
238pp. Macmillan, £8.95.  
0 02 548600 4

The publication in the past two decades of much revisionary work on early Tudor law, government and administration, the state of the church immediately before the Reformation, the impact of Renaissance humanism both on the universities and more widely upon English culture and, not least, of an important biography of Henry VIII by J. J. Scarisbrick, has opened up the possibility of a major new scholarly reassessment of the career of Thomas Wolsey.

This is not the task, however, which Nancy Lenz Harvey has assigned herself, and it would be unfair to judge her *Thomas Cardinal Wolsey* by these standards. Deliberately setting her sights at a popular audience she has aimed at an imaginative recreation of the cardinal's public life. In *Elizabeth of York and The Rose and The Thorn* Mrs Harvey has already portrayed the mother and two sisters of Henry VIII; now she confronts the most overweening figure, the king apart, on the early Tudor scene. She approaches her history from a background in English literature and apprehends Wolsey's

biography in terms of the drama. His rise from humble beginnings in Ipswich, his immense power in church and state as the chief minister of Henry VIII virtually from the king's accession until the late 1520s, his ignominious fall on his failure to procure the dissolution of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, provide to the full all the elements of a classic tragedy.

Mrs Harvey divides her book into three parts entitled "World and Time Enough", "The Tides of Pomp" and "Injuries of Wanton Time" and quotes liberally from the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* and contemporary accounts such as Cavendish's *Life of Cardinal Wolsey* at the most crucial moments in the action. Delighting to dwell upon Tudor pageantry, she reserves her main energies for descriptions of the intricate manoeuvres of international diplomacy which culminated briefly in the meeting of Henry VIII and Francis I on the Field of Cloth of Gold, of the seemingly endless court intrigues and of the pathos of Wolsey's death, disgraced and friendless, at Leicester Abbey. The book contains pleasant illustrations of the chief actors and of Wolsey's great palace at Hampton Court.

While Mrs Harvey's exuberant American rhetoric may not be altogether to English taste, she has certainly brought back from her "prowl" through "the distant mists of the sixteenth century" a vivid evocation of Wolsey's life for the general reader.